Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development

Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

SIERRA LEONE:
THE FORGOTTEN CRISIS

David Pratt, MP Nepean-Carleton
Special Envoy to Sierra Leone

April 23, 1999

4007.1E

125 promenade Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Telephone/Téléphone : **613 944 8278** Fax/Télécopieur : **613 944 0687**
www.cfp-pec.gc.ca

Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Centre canadien pour le développement de la politique étrangère

104-00005/

125 Sussex Dr. Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

SIERRA LEONE:
THE FORGOTTEN CRISIS

David Pratt, MP Nepean-Carleton
Special Envoy to Sierra Leone

April 23, 1999

4007.1E

ISBN: 0-662-30754-2
E2-393/1999E

Tel: (613) 944-8278
Internet address: http://www.cfp-pecf.gc.ca Fax: (613) 944-0687

Sierra Leone:

The Forgotten Crisis

Report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, P.C., M.P.
from David Pratt, M.P., Nepean-Carleton,
Special Envoy to Sierra Leone

April 23, 1999

Note: This is not a Government of Canada report. It is the report of a private Member of Parliament who has, with the help of Foreign Affairs staff and working within some tight time frames, directed a fresh pair of eyes and ears to the current crisis in Sierra Leone.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Acknowledgements 3

Executive Summary 4

Part 1 - Background 7

Part 2 - The Security Situation 16

Part 3 - Humanitarian 29

Part 4 - Political and Peace Process 39

Conclusion 44

Bibliography 46

SIERRA LEONE: THE FORGOTTEN CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

In a controversial essay that appeared five years ago in *The Atlantic Monthly*, American writer Robert D. Kaplan wrote about nations breaking up under a tidal flow of refugees, borders crumbling and war becoming a continuation of crime on a massive scale. This, he wrote, was a preview of the first decades of the twenty-first century. One of the many areas Kaplan focussed on was Sierra Leone. He wrote that: *Tyranny is nothing new in Sierra Leone or in the rest of West Africa. But it is now part and parcel of an increasing lawlessness that is far more significant than any coup, rebel incursion, or episodic experiment in democracy.*

In a remarkably prescient concluding paragraph to this 1994 essay, Kaplan noted that: *W e ignore this dying region (West Africa) at our own risk. When the Berlin Wall was falling, in November of 1989, I happened to be in Kosovo, covering a riot between Serbs and Albanians. The future was in Kosovo, I told myself that night, not in Berlin. The same day that Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat clasped hands on the White House lawn, my Air Afrique plane was approaching Bamako, Mali, revealing corrugated-zinc shacks at the edge of an expanding desert. The real news wasn t at the White House, I realized. It was right below.*

In many respects, Kosovo and Sierra Leone are two sides of the same coin which is intra-state conflict in the late 1990 s. The conventional Rules for Armed Combat have essentially disappeared. With both the Serbs and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the rebel group in Sierra Leone, civilian populations, rather than being afforded protection, have become both targets and tools of war. In Sierra Leone and Kosovo, war has taken on the appearance of crime on a massive scale as Kaplan predicted. In Sierra Leone, it has resulted in human rights violations on a staggering scale. Murder, rape, mutilation, looting, abductions, human shields, child soldiers, land mines, property destruction; Sierra Leone is rife with human security issues. Interestingly, the number of refugees that have been generated by both conflicts is roughly the same.

My personal interest in Sierra Leone goes back to 1990 when I made my first visit to the country as part of a municipal development program administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and funded by CIDA. At the time, I was a local councillor with the City of Nepean. Our municipality was linked with Bo, the second largest city in Sierra Leone. With the assistance of a local NGO called Nepean Outreach to the World (NOW), we were able to build a new marketplace, buy much needed equipment for the town hall and conduct various types of training for the municipal staff, among other things. Under this program, I made a total of three trips to Sierra Leone, the last being in 1993. In 1995, with the security situation worsening, it became necessary to suspend activities under the program. However, with each trip I made to Sierra Leone, my fascination for the country, its people and its rich culture grew.

Knowing of my interest and previous involvement in Sierra Leone, in late February, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked me to take on the role of

Special Envoy. With more than a little trepidation, I accepted. I was asked to lead a fact-finding mission and to examine the security, humanitarian and political situations in Sierra Leone. Following the mission, I was to prepare a report for the Minister s consideration.

In preparation for my mission, I visited the United Nations on March 12 for meetings and briefings with U.N. officials and Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions. On March 20, I departed for Africa with Mr. Jacques Crête, Director of the West and Central Africa Division of the Foreign Affairs Department. We later linked up with Lt-Col. Stephen Moffat, Head of the Peacekeeping Section of Foreign Affairs.

Our mission took us initially to London where we met with the U.K. Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Right Honourable Tony Lloyd, the Head of the African Department, FCO, Mr. James Bevan, and Mr. Moses Anafu, a senior official of the Commonwealth Secretariat, among others. From London, we travelled to Conakry, Guinea, where we met with senior officials including the Prime Minister, Mr. Lamine Sidime. During our stay in Guinea, we also visited a refugee camp at Forecariah not far from the Sierra Leonean border.

Our next stop was Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone where we met with a number of senior officials including President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and the Chief of the Defence Staff for the Sierra Leonean Army, Brigadier-General Maxwell Khobe, a Nigerian, and British High Commissioner, Peter Penfold. We toured various parts of Freetown including the facilities for displaced people, the main hospital, an amputee camp and the largely destroyed east-end of the city. We also met with various representatives of NGO's. After a brief stop in Abidjan, Côte d Ivoire and a meeting with a senior Foreign Ministry official, we concluded our visit to the sub-region in Accra, Ghana where we met several other ministers and the Vice-President of Ghana John Atta Mills.

It is worthwhile emphasizing that the contents of this report should not be viewed as the future framework for Canadian foreign policy on Sierra Leone. This is not a Government of Canada report. It is the report of a private Member of Parliament who has, with the help of Foreign Affairs staff and working within some tight time frames, directed a fresh pair of eyes and ears to the current crisis in Sierra Leone. Should this report result in some actions being taken by the Canadian Government to increase the assistance we provide this devastated country, I will of course, be very, very pleased. Because, God knows, Sierra Leone needs our help.

David Pratt, M.P.
Nepean-Carleton
April, 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people whose efforts in this undertaking should be acknowledged. Mr. Jacques Crête, Director of the West and Central Africa Division of Foreign Affairs and Lt.-Col. Stephen Moffat, Head of the Peacekeeping Section of Foreign Affairs, were tremendous assets to this mission because of their background, experience, knowledge and dedication to duty. I believe we worked well as a team both on the ground as observers and back in Ottawa debating some of the issues and their implications as we prepared this report. We started our mission as colleagues and we ended it as friends.

Throughout this process, I received a great deal of assistance and support from Heidi Hulan, Eric Hoskins and Debora Brown of Minister s Axworthy s office. In New York, during my visit to the United Nations, I was aided immeasurably by our Ambassador, Robert Fowler, and his very capable and skilled First Secretary for Political Affairs, David Angell. Thank you as well to the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development for the kind and quick response to our request for the research necessary for this report and our mission.

In Africa, our job was made easier by a well-planned and executed itinerary of meetings with key officials and tours of specific sites. The bulk of this responsibility fell on our Ambassador to Guinea, Denis Briand, who also serves as our High Commissioner to Sierra Leone. He was our host at several meetings which produced some very helpful background information and candid assessments of the situation. He made us feel as though his home was ours.

In Freetown, British High Commissioner Peter Penfold opened his home to his Canadian cousins and provided Ambassador Briand and I with a safe and secure room for the night. His hospitality and his insights into the situation in Sierra Leone were absolutely invaluable. U.S. Ambassador Joseph Melrose was also kind enough to assist us in various ways including transportation to and from Freetown. In Abidjan, Ambassador Don McMaster also opened his home to us for meetings and again in Accra, our High Commissioner Janet Graham, welcomed us into her home and organized a productive schedule of excellent meetings with senior Ghanaian officials.

A few other words of thanks are perhaps in order to Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy who entrusted me with this mission, to Mr. Des Garvey, who through Nepean Outreach to the World (NOW) got me interested and involved in Africa in the first place, to my staff for all their encouragement and support and to Sylvie Gachnang of Foreign Affairs for her excellent computer work. Last but not least, I thank my wife Joan, who has endured no doubt with some nervousness, my four trips to Sierra Leone.

dp

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The stark reality is that war and suffering are not new phenomena in Sierra Leone. Since gaining its independence in 1961, this tiny African nation has experienced almost every known political system from totalitarianism to democracy and everything in between, with the past eight years being particularly savage by any standard. This report examines three broad themes that are central to the current crisis in Sierra Leone - the security situation, the humanitarian situation and the political situation. It attempts to better understand this brutal conflict and identify areas of greatest need so that Canada and others might focus what resources they might muster to assist a desperate nation.

The Security Situation

The overall situation in Sierra Leone is extremely tense. The government and ECOMOG, nearly defeated in January 1999, are now firmly in control of Freetown. ECOMOG, a multinational force consisting of troops from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, can guarantee freedom of movement on the Freetown Peninsula, but there continues to be significant rebel activity throughout the rest of the country. ECOMOG is in desperate need of a significant amount of logistical support, both lethal and non-lethal, and it appears that the rebels are re-arming themselves in preparation for the next round of hostilities.

Foreign involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict is a serious problem, and there is clear evidence that Liberia and Burkina Faso are supporting the rebel efforts. The diamond mining industry provides the rebels with potential revenue of approximately $300 million per year. Precisely how much is spent on small arms and ammunition is unknown. What is known is that arms are apparently procured in eastern Europe and staged through Burkina Faso and then continue on to Liberia for eventual delivery to rebel forces in Sierra Leone.

Security in Sierra Leone and the region also covers the role of civilian police. The Sierra Leone police require instruction in most modern police skills, ranging from crime detection to investigation to prevention for both policemen and police trainers. The police problem is equally serious in Guinea and they also need significant levels of support.

This section of the report concludes that any activities taken with respect to security would have to take into consideration not only the situation in Sierra Leone but of neighbouring states as well, in particular francophone Guinea. As well, both humanitarian efforts and the peace process itself have little hope of success without an extension of ECOMOG s security envelope.

The Humanitarian Situation

The scope for humanitarian assistance is immense. The humanitarian situation in Sierra Leone is critical and has the potential to get much worse. There are 700,000 displaced people internally and another half a million refugees outside Sierra Leone borders. More specifically, there are

400,000 Sierra Leone refugees in Guinea, approximately 100,000 in Liberia and the estimates of displaced people in Freetown alone are 250,000. Neither the Government of Sierra Leone nor international non-governmental organizations have any idea what the humanitarian situation is beyond the Freetown peninsula or the towns, and unofficial estimates put the number of people living in rebel-controlled areas with no access to humanitarian aid at close to 1.5 million.

Of particular note is the plight of women and children, who have borne the worst of the atrocities inflicted by the rebels. Refugee camps and hospitals are full of victims who have had one or more limbs amputated, the youngest witnessed (a girl) being less than four years old. Approximately 3,000 kidnapped children are still unaccounted for, and for those that have survived, there are no schools to attend. Most of the schools in the Freetown area were destroyed and many teachers have left the country.

The needs range from the immediate provision of shelter, food assistance and the provision of prostheses to long term rehabilitation for victims of the war and education assistance. Following a careful review of the requirements, Canada could provide significant bilateral humanitarian support in those areas where resources permit, and work with various partners (federal, provincial, municipal, non-governmental institutions and other governments) to meet those aims where resources could best be pooled with others.

The Political Situation

The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to its two track strategy for peace, which calls for enhancing security while promoting dialogue. However, both the government and the rebels face internal and external obstacles in their pursuit of a negotiated peace. The rebels do not appear to have a formal political agenda and are divided between those who believe in a military victory and those who would opt for a negotiated settlement. The same divisions also exist within President Kabbah s government, which is as well under pressure from ECOMOG sources to seek a negotiated peace.

Regional neighbours have played an important role in the pursuit of peace in Sierra Leone. In 1996, the President of Côte d Ivoire, Henri Konan Bédié, brokered the Abidjan Accord which, despite its lack of implementation or monitoring mechanisms, could still provide a sound framework for any future peace agreements. Other organizations also have a significant role to play in the Sierra Leone peace process. The United Nations Security Council has authorized the deployment of a UN Observers Mission to Sierra Leone and has established a sanctions regime against the rebels and their supporters. ECOWAS and its Group of Six (Ghana, Guinea, Côte d Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo) is well placed to assist in the peace process. However, it will require international support to do so. Finally, there is the Contact Group on Sierra Leone, an *ad hoc* grouping of nations, including Canada, whose aim is to sustain and promote international support for Sierra Leone and ECOMOG.

The third track identified in this report provides Canada with a broad menu of options for political action, particularly with respect to working through or with other organizations. As a member of the Security Council, Canada could provide added impetus to Security Council activities dealing with Sierra Leone. Membership in both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie provides Canada a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between Anglophone and Francophone Africa. As well, Canada could consider becoming more directly involved in the sub-region through attendance as an observer at future ECOWAS meetings.

PART 1 - BACKGROUND

Introduction

The Republic of Sierra Leone covers an area of 72,000 square kilometres, roughly the size of New Brunswick. It has a population of about 4.2 million people. Since the rebel war began in 1992, statistics in Sierra Leone have lost much of their meaning, but one calculation is striking. For several years Canada has been rated highest on the UNDP Human Development Index, which measures life expectancy, educational attainment and standard of living. For much of the past decade, out of 174 countries, Sierra Leone has been last.

Sierra Leone before Independence

Sierra Leone has two major language groups - the Mende and the Mel , although there are as many as seven or eight sub sets of these languages. With the exception of the Limba and the Sherbro, most of today s ethnic groups entered the country after 1400 as the result of disturbances elsewhere in the region. The first European visitors were the Portuguese who gave the country its name - Lion Mountain - after the shape of the mountains on the Freetown peninsula.

In 1787, 356 Black Poor and 100 whites left Britain to establish a colony in Sierra Leone, although few survived their first two years. In 1792, 1,200 freed slaves, many of them refugees from the American War of Independence, arrived from Halifax and established a permanent settlement they called Freetown . Today their descendants are still sometimes referred to as Nova Scotians . The settlers became known as Creoles, over time developing their own language based on English, Krio .

The Sierra Leone Company which managed the colony in its first years was dissolved in 1808, and Sierra Leone became a Crown Colony. It was thus the first modern political state in sub-Saharan Africa. British colonial authorities were slow to extend their political influence into the interior, however, and it was not until 1896 that a protectorate was declared over the territory that encompasses modern day Sierra Leone. Between 1895 and 1908, a narrow gauge railway was built between Freetown and eastern parts of the country. But it was not until World War II that roads were constructed to the provinces. Sierra Leone boasted the first university in Sub Saharan Africa - Fourah Bay College, founded in 1827 - but health and education services were left largely to missionaries. In 1939, only three of the country s 12 secondary schools were directly operated by the government.

In the early part of the 20th century, palm kernels became the chief export crop. Diamonds, discovered in the eastern Kono District in 1930, had become the largest export earner by 1938. In 1933 an iron mine was opened at Marampa in Port Loko District, earning almost 30% of the colony s export revenue by 1938. These two commodities, iron and diamonds, were instrumental in bringing Sierra Leoneans outside of Freetown into the modern cash economy.

Between 1951 and 1961, power gradually devolved from British officials to elected Sierra Leoneans who took responsibility for some ministries in 1953, and for all but external affairs and defense in 1958. A medical doctor, Sir Milton Margai, became Chief Minister in 1954, Premier in 1958, and upon independence in 1961, Prime Minister.

The Post Independence Years: 1961-8

The years immediately before and after independence were marked by optimism and high expectations. Roads were being built, clinics and hospitals opened, and everywhere new schools were springing up. Primary school enrolment tripled between 1948 and 1958, and in the Northern Province, the number of children in primary school rose from 3,291 in 1948 to 24,034 in 1963.

Milton Margai was the first leader of the Sierra Leone People s Party (SLPP), formed in 1951. A close early colleague was Siaka Stevens, who had been General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union at Marampa in the 1940s and was later Minister for Mines and Labour. Shortly before independence, Stevens broke with Margai and formed a new party, the All Peoples Congress (APC). Milton Margai died only three years after independence and was succeeded by his brother, Albert. Within two years, beset by charges of corruption and mismanagement, Albert Margai was beginning to talk about creating a one-party state.

The general elections of 1967 were pivotal. Although he had by then disavowed the idea of a one-party state, Albert Margai introduced proposals for a new republican constitution, and was widely mistrusted. He charged that an army coup was in the making, and this served as grounds for a purge of the officer corps, creating a turmoil of competing factions within the military. Registration and balloting in the March 1967 general election were badly mismanaged and there were widespread rumours of vote-rigging and corruption. Unofficial results gave the APC 32 seats, the SLPP 28, and independents six, four of whom said they would support an APC government. The Governor General, therefore, asked Siaka Stevens to form a new government.

On the same day, however, Army commander David Lansana declared martial law and arrested both the Governor General and Stevens, on the constitutional grounds that all election results had not been tallied. Three days later, when it became apparent that his intention was to restore Margai, junior officers arrested him and established a military government known as the National Reformation Council. A year later the NRC itself was overthrown by noncommissioned officers who invited Siaka Stevens, then in exile in Guinea, to return and form a government.

The Stevens Years: 1968-85

Until 1968, politics in Sierra Leone were marked by two cleavages. The first, which had largely played itself out by the late 1950s, was between the Freetown Creoles, who had dominated economic and political life in the Colony s first 150 years, and people in the much more populous and less developed protectorate. The second political cleavage was between the northern part of the country and the more developed south which was largely Mende-speaking.

The SLPP had been strongly supported by the Mende, one of the reasons that Stevens - a Limba from the north - had formed his own party, appealing to anti-Mende sentiment and to social discontent among a growing number of unemployed urban youth.

Within two months of assuming office, Stevens purged the army of its senior Mende officers, placing northerners in charge. He also closed the railway on economic grounds, although many believed this was an effort to cut off parts of the country that had voted against the APC. Following an abortive coup attempt in 1971, Stevens established an Internal Security Unit (ISU). This was a brutal, personally managed paramilitary force made up of young men recruited largely from the slums of Freetown. The 1973 general elections were marked by violence and vote rigging, but the elections of 1977 were much worse, with armed ISU gangs disrupting the process throughout the country and violently suppressing student demonstrations. A year later, a referendum on the establishment of a one-party state passed, with 97% of the voters expressing their support.

The Stevens years were marked by a systematic subversion of the formal state apparatus and by the growth of a large informal economy, much of it based on an illicit diamond trade. In 1933, the Sierra Leone Selection Trust Ltd. (SLST) had been given an exclusive 99-year prospecting and mining lease over the entire country. In 1955 the tax rate rose to 60% and SLST relinquished its rights to all but 450 square miles of territory. Because the Kono deposits are alluvial, heavy equipment - although more efficient than individual digging - is unnecessary. During the 1930s and 1940s, SLST was largely able to control the mining areas, but a diamond rush in the 1950s brought an influx of illicit diggers, known as san san boys into the area. Between 1953 and 1957 the number of illicit diggers grew from 5,000 to as many as 70,000. Despite an SLST paramilitary force with helicopter support, violence and criminal anarchy became the dominant characteristic of the district, with a vast network of smugglers channelling diamonds to Liberia where taxes for buyers were lower and profits higher.

By the late 1970s, SLST had been disbanded and the diamond trade nationalized. Over the years, Siaka Stevens allied himself with a group of powerful Lebanese merchants who controlled some of the official diamond trade, much of the unofficial trade, and the trade in virtually all other essential imports and exports. In the ensuing years, diamonds continued to attract the attention of young Sierra Leonean diggers, government officials, rebel forces and their Liberian backers, and a range of companies that ignored or sought to overcome the danger associated with the trade.

By the mid 1980s, the country was descending into insolvency. Growing foreign debt, rampant inflation, currency devaluation, budget deficits, corruption and declining exports led to chronic fuel, power and food shortages. Youth unemployment grew, along with student radicalism at Fourah Bay University. In 1985, a year marked by violent labour and student unrest, Stevens - then over 80 - retired, handing power to Joseph Momoh, head of the army.

The Momoh Years: 1985-92

Joseph Momoh came to power on a wave of popular enthusiasm. It was hoped that he might be able to revive the collapsing state and revitalize the economy with his Constructive Nationalism . Corruption and indiscipline continued, however, with high inflation, repeated devaluations, blackouts and shortages of food and fuel. Official diamond exports fell from two million carats in 1970 to 48,000 in 1988 - a result of mismanagement and corruption rather than declining mineral resources.

During the Momoh years there were two trends, largely unnoticed at the time, that would have important ramifications later. One was the continued and dramatic growth in the number of unemployed and disaffected youth. They drifted from the countryside in one of two directions: either to Freetown and other urban centres, or to the diamond fields of Kono. In either case, they became socialized in a climate of violence, drugs and criminality. The other trend was a growth in student militants. During the second half of the 1980s, many university students had become radicalized, in part by the violence of the government s suppression of their demonstrations, and in part by exposure to new ideas, including the thoughts of Col. Qaddafi, as expressed in *The Green Book*. Initially, Libyan sponsorship of Sierra Leonean student groups and student trips to Libya was open, but following the violent expulsion of 41 university students with alleged Libyan links in 1985, *The Green Book* and its author took on more symbolic importance, and the tangible connection went underground. Between 1987 and 1988, between twenty-five and fifty Sierra Leoneans were taken to Libya for training in the art of revolution .

Among the students was a functional illiterate who had become part of a revolutionary cell in Kono. Foday Sankoh was a gray-haired former army corporal and photographer who had been jailed for seven years for alleged implication in the 1971 coup plot against Siaka Stevens. Ironically, only three of those trained in Libya showed up later in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and the only survivor after a year or so was Foday Sankoh.

In the late 1980s, events were taking place in Liberia that would soon have a profound effect on Sierra Leone. At the end of 1989, Charles Taylor launched an attack on Samuel Doe s government with a small band of men, several of them, including Taylor himself, with Libyan training or connections. Taylor also received support from the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso, in part through political, family and personal relationships that some have described as like the dynastic marriages and alliance of European princes of old . Burkinabè support for Taylor was later extended to Foday Sankoh and the RUF.

Operating initially out of the Ivory Coast, Taylor s rebellion quickly took on ethnic overtones and within a year had become a major humanitarian disaster. In 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) put together an intervention force made up of troops from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana and the Gambia. Known as the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), it thwarted Taylor s drive to an early military victory. Because Taylor had earlier been refused support by Momoh (and was briefly arrested in Freetown using a

Burkinabè passport), and because ECOMOG used Freetown as a staging ground, Taylor spoke frequently during 1990 and 1991 of plans to attack Sierra Leone.

By 1991 the Momoh regime was in serious difficulty. Beset by a crumbling economy, growing popular agitation and factional turmoil within the government, Momoh announced a return to multi-party politics, and general elections were planned for 1992. Before the elections could be held, however, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked. With the assistance of Charles Taylor s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Foday Sankoh and a small band of men crossed from Liberia into Sierra Leone s Eastern Province in March 1991, with the express aim of ending the APC s 24 year grip on power. Raids on several border towns over the next few days demonstrated the weakness of the Sierra Leone military, and within a month, most of Kailahun District was under rebel control.

A humanitarian crisis quickly resulted from the RUF s tactics, which involved brutal attacks on unarmed civilians and children. Attempting to copy the ethnic incitement that had served Charles Taylor well in Liberia, the RUF at first targeted Fula and Madingo traders, murdering more than 100 in its first two months of operations. It also targeted Lebanese traders, beheading five in Bo District. The atrocities never sparked an ethnic divide, but they created alarm among the civilian population and caused rapid and widespread displacement. Panicked, President Momoh quickly doubled the size of the army from 3,000 men to almost 6,000, drawing most of his new recruits from vagrants in Freetown - the rural...unemployed, a fair number of hooligans, drug addicts and thieves - as his foreign minister at the time later put it. Further confusion was added to the mix by the formation in Sierra Leone of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO), a coalition of anti-Taylor Liberians who, with Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) support, initially fought both the RUF and Taylor s NPFL.

Because of corruption and mismanagement, Sierra Leone s front line troops were badly underpaid and demoralized. In April 1992, a group from the Eastern front travelled to Freetown to protest their situation. Within a day, the mutiny became a coup and Joseph Momoh fled to Guinea. A military junta, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) was formed, with 29-year-old army paymaster, Capt. Valentine Strasser as Chairman.

The NPRC Regime: 1992-6

Initially, the NPRC was enormously popular, especially among Sierra Leone s youth. The leadership itself was young and many had grown up in the slums of Freetown. Young people in Freetown embarked on a voluntary cleanup and beautification campaign, and a new youth volunteer force was recruited to prosecute the war. Many of the newcomers were not volunteers, however, and one estimate places the number of child soldiers under the age of 15 at more than a thousand by 1993. Soon the NPRC came to resemble the regime it had ousted.

During 1992 and 1993 the fortunes of the RUF fluctuated. On occasion, they overran the diamond areas were pushed back and retook the area again. Civilians accused by the government

of collaboration were arrested and some were executed. But the penalty for not collaborating with the RUF was as severe, or worse. The RUF had two major calling cards: dead civilians, and hundreds, possibly thousands, of living civilians with their hands, feet, ears or genitals crudely amputated. The latter served as living and constant warnings to anyone in their path, and rumours of an impending RUF attack became enough to clear entire towns and villages.

Any force with access to the diamond areas also had access to diamonds, and it is likely that all parties on occasion took advantage of whatever was available. It gradually became unclear who was responsible for a particular ambush, or for starting a rumour that cleared the way for a looting spree. In some cases attacks were carried out by soldiers and blamed on the RUF. Soldiers by day and rebels by night, they became known as sobels . The RUF added to the sobel story by carrying out raids in stolen army uniforms.

Towards the end of 1992, a new force entered the picture, the kamajors . *Kamajor* is a Mende word meaning hunter. In traditional Mende society, the hunter was a guardian of society and part of a mystical, invincible warrior cult. Joined by a number of educated individuals and retired military personnel, the Kamajors soon became a force to contend with, fighting back not only against the RUF, but against the excesses of the NPRC government.

By 1995, however, the military situation had become desperate, with hit and run raids throughout the country giving the RUF an appearance of great strength. Early in the year, the RUF overran the country s last remaining economic assets, the SIEROMCO bauxite mine and the Sierra Rutile titanium mines, allegedly with the assistance of soldiers commanded by Major Johnny Paul Koroma.

Until about 1995, it was unclear what the RUF stood for, who Foday Sankoh was, and what he wanted. Although he had given the occasional BBC radio-telephone interview, it was not until the 1995 appearance of the RUF s *Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a New Sierra Leone*, that any consistent ideals or purpose were enunciated. Allegedly drafted by an employee of International Alert, *Footpaths* contains words and phrases lifted directly from Mao Zedong, Amilcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon (Abdullah).

While it is true that the RUF is made up of disaffected young men, a very high proportion of them were already alienated and dangerous before the RUF opportunity arose. Only a tiny fraction of Sierra Leonean youth has joined the RUF of their own volition. The main RUF recruits have been drawn from the ranks of *san san boys* and from the same Freetown slums where Siaka Stevens recruited his brutal ISU and where Joseph Momoh found the material to double his army. Others were children who were kidnapped, drugged, and forced to commit atrocities. The radical intellectual roots of the RUF were extinguished in its first year of operation, and its brutal attacks on civilians stand in contradiction to its ostensible aim of creating a revolutionary egalitarian system .

By early 1995, the RUF was only miles from Freetown, as much a result of the army s incompetence as of RUF prowess. In fact at the time, the RUF was estimated by some to have an overall strength of three to four thousand, with a hard core of only five to six hundred soldiers. Part of the NPRC problem was its calculation that at least 20% of its own troops were disloyal. In May 1995, the NPRC turned to Executive Outcomes (EO), a South African security firm that had successfully repelled UNITA rebels on behalf of the Angolan government. The introduction of EO to the NPRC was made by a Director of Branch Energy and Heritage Gas and Oil, Anthony Buckingham, who negotiated the contract with EO and who allegedly made advance payments to EO in return for government concessions related to Sierra Rutile and the diamond areas.

The first EO contingent arrived in Sierra Leone in May 1995. Within ten days of their operational startup, they had beaten the RUF back from Freetown, and within a month had cleared the diamond areas. Part of their success was due to their own combat skills, although they never totalled more than 200 men in all. They brought with them excellent air support, first-rate communications equipment and good trainers, working with a small group of Sierra Leonean soldiers, and later with Kamajors who were by then 2,000 - 3,000 strong. By early 1996, the RUF had been seriously damaged, and had been pushed away from the diamond areas that had helped to pay for their efforts.

The NPRC, under strong pressure from both the public and donor agencies to return Sierra Leone to civilian rule, announced that elections would be held in February 1996. In January, however, Valentine Strasser was overthrown by his deputy, Brig. Julius Maada Bio. Thought to be an attempt to prolong the military government, public pressure to hold elections mounted. Hard-pressed by continuing EO attacks, the RUF announced a cease-fire and sought unconditional peace talks with Bio s government. These began in Abidjan only a few days before the elections were held. After two rounds of voting, the SLPP formed a government, with Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a former UNDP official, sworn in as President.

The Period after 1996

The peace talks in Abidjan went on for almost nine months, during which RUF attacks resumed, only to be fended off with devastating effect by EO and Kamajor forces. When Foday Sankoh and the GOSL signed a peace agreement at the end of November 1996, it looked as though the RUF was a spent force. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that President Kabbah agreed to the expulsion of Executive Outcomes within five weeks of signing the agreement (although LifeGuard, an EO offshoot remained behind to protect the diamond areas). It is also not surprising, in view of subsequent events, that Foday Sankoh refused to sanction a 720-member UN Peacekeeping Force.

The RUF gained most from the peace agreement. It was given an on-going political role and legitimacy, and was absolved of responsibility for its past activities. More importantly, it gained militarily in the sense that the government was left exposed with little reliable security beyond

the Kamajors and a new contingent of Nigerian troops sent to bolster the ECOMOG force. RUF attacks continued, in part because of disagreement in the leadership over the peace agreement, while in Freetown, a number of army officers were arrested in a suspected coup plot.

In May 1997, a group of soldiers attacked the central jail, releasing the coup plotters and an estimated 600 criminals. President Kabbah fled and Major Johnny Paul Koroma, freed in the prison break, became head the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC invited the RUF to join them, declaring the war to be over. The period of joint AFRC-RUF rule was characterized by a complete breakdown of law and order, and by a collapse of the formal economy. Schools, banks, commercial services and government offices ceased to function, while rape and looting became the order of the day. As Amnesty International puts it, *The rule of law completely collapsed and violence engulfed the country* , with Kabbah allies, students and journalist targeted for torture, rape and murder.

During this period, exiled President Kabbah made contact with a British security firm, Sandline International, which had connections with Executive Outcomes, Branch Energy and Diamond Works, a company traded on the Vancouver Stock Market. The apparent aim was to obtain Sandline assistance in ousting the AFRC and liberating the diamond areas. Finance was reportedly provided by a Vancouver-based Indian national, Rakesh Saxena. In February 1998, 28 tons of small arms arrived in Sierra Leone as a part of this deal, and was impounded by ECOMOG as a contravention of a UN arms embargo.

Later that month, ECOMOG forced the AFRC/RUF out of Freetown in a fierce battle that took the lives of many civilians. By then, estimates of the number of dead in the rebel war ranged upward from 50,000. At different times in the previous six years, estimates of the number of displaced people were as high as 2.5 million - more than half of the entire population.

Restored to office, President Kabbah took steps to begin demobilizing the entire army. Courts martial were held, following which 24 convicted military personnel were executed. Between August and November 1998, several civilian trials were held. A total of 47 individuals were convicted of treason and other charges associated with the AFRC/RUF administration, and sentenced to death. Foday Sankoh, who had been arrested in Nigeria and returned to Sierra Leone, was also tried, found guilty and sentenced to death.

During this period, the AFRC/RUF forces conducted a violent rampage throughout the country, chased from one place to another without great success by ECOMOG forces. In a November 1998 report, Amnesty International said, *Since their removal from power, the AFRC and RUF have wreaked a campaign of terror against unarmed civilians and human rights abuses have reached unprecedented levels. Several thousand civilians have been brutally killed or mutilated. Hundreds of others have been abducted from their villages and forced to join their attackers. The RUF referred to this period as Operation No Living Thing* .

With Foday Sankoh and other AFRC/RUF defendants appealing their convictions, the RUF again appeared at the gates to Freetown in January 1999, catching both the government and ECOMOG off guard. Using women and children as a human shield, some RUF troops were able to bypass ECOMOG troops and join comrades who had already infiltrated the city. Among their number were Liberians and a small number of European mercenaries. In the fighting that ensued, an estimated five thousand people died, including cabinet ministers, journalists and lawyers who were specifically targeted. Before the rebels were beaten back, large parts of the city were burned and 3,000 children were abducted as they retreated. While many of the convicted AFRC/RUF collaborators were freed, Foday Sankoh remained in government custody. RUF commander Sam Bockarie, a former *san san boy*, said at the end of January that *No government can succeed in this country if it doesn t include Foday Sankoh.* Unless the RUF was given a share of power, he said, *No government can rule. We ll make the country ungovernable.* He later announced that Johnny Paul Koroma had been named deputy leader of the RUF.

The RUF and its newfound army colleagues defy all definitions and typologies of guerilla movements. Abdullah and Muana argue that the RUF is neither a separatist uprising rooted in a specific demand, as in the case of Eritrea, nor a reformist movement with a radical agenda superior to the regime it sought to overthrow. Nor does it possess the kind of leadership that would be necessary to designate it as a warlord insurgency. The RUF is a peculiar guerilla movement without any significant national following or ethnic support. Perhaps because of its social base and its lack of an emancipatory programme to garner support from other social groups, it has remained a bandit organization solely driven by the survivalist needs of its predominantly uneducated and alienated battle front and battle group commanders. Neither the peasantry, the natural ally of most revolutionary movements, nor the students, amongst whose ranks the RUF-to-be originated, lent any support to the organization during the eight years of fighting.

PART 2 - THE SECURITY SITUATION

Overview

At first glance, the security situation in Sierra Leone seems quite simple a democratically elected government facing a somewhat loose rebellion of disgruntled former soldiers. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. To begin to understand the true complexity of this conflict, one must understand several fundamental facts.

First, the Sierra Leone conflict is inextricably linked to the security of the entire sub-region, and thus cannot be examined in isolation. Any actions taken with respect to the conflict in Sierra Leone will inevitably have a significant impact on the security situation in and policies of Guinea, Liberia, Côte d Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria.

Second, there is no purely military solution to this conflict. It is a counter insurgency war; total victory, if at all achievable, would take years if not decades of costly bush guerrilla warfare. The best any side can hope to achieve is a modicum of military superiority over their opponent. Given the tactics and strategies employed by both sides, it appears that all parties to the conflict accept this limitation and consequently are continually vying for even the smallest of tactical advantages.

Third, the conflict in Sierra Leone is not solely a military one there is a significant police dimension to the problem that must be addressed in conjunction with the military aspects of the conflict if peace is to truly take hold in Sierra Leone.

Finally, the security dimension of the conflict in Sierra Leone must be addressed as soon as possible. Without peace and stability, the relief so desperately needed by so many people cannot be delivered. Without security, followed by aid and assistance, there is virtually no hope for economic reconstruction and rehabilitation for this war-torn nation.

At present the overall situation in Sierra Leone is extremely tense. The GOSL and ECOMOG are firmly in control of Freetown proper, which can best be described as secure but not necessarily safe. Both the GOSL and ECOMOG insist that the entire Freetown Peninsula is secure, but this appears to be a somewhat optimistic claim. ECOMOG can guarantee freedom of movement on the peninsula, but current information indicates that there continues to be significant rebel infiltration and information gathering activities throughout the Freetown Peninsula.

Beyond the peninsula, ECOMOG and the Sierra Leone Civil Defence Force (CDF), the Kamajors, continue to operate in the southwest one-third of the country and hold several towns in the country, including Bo, Kenema, Port Loko, Mile 91 and Makeni. However, access to these locations is by helicopter only. The transportation system has been severely damaged and those

roads still serviceable are very vulnerable to rebel attack. As well, ECOMOG forces in these locations are still subject to harassing attacks by the rebels.

The RUF control the northeastern one third of the nation which includes the diamond mining regions. The area in between ECOMOG/GOSL-held territory and those regions held by the RUF is *terra incognita* from a security standpoint. Very little (in fact almost nothing) is known about the situation in rebel-held territories, and information on the situation in these areas is spotty at best. This makes sound operational planning all but impossible. Consequently, progress by ECOMOG and GOSL has to date been painstakingly slow.

There is evidence of foreign military involvement in the RUF from Liberia and Burkina Faso. As well, both GOSL and ECOMOG sources claim that Ukrainian mercenaries are also involved in training rebel forces. There is certainly a significant amount of small arms trafficking in support of rebel forces. Recent events and evidence indicate that small arms are coming from Eastern Europe through Libya, Burkina Faso and Liberia for delivery to the rebels just across the Liberia-Sierra Leone border. Financial support for rebel operations comes from revenue generated by the RUF (either directly or indirectly) from the mining of diamonds in the interior of the country.

It appears for the moment that rebel forces are pausing to re-group following their January offensive. However, this is but a brief respite. Most evidence points to the fact that both sides are furiously re-arming themselves in preparation for the next round of hostilities. The rainy season in Sierra Leone starts in May, after which military operations will likely all but cease until September.

Rumours abound about the next rebel attack, and given the shaky state of the GOSL, chances are reasonable that the rebels may try one more push before the rainy season in the off chance that they just might topple President Kabbah s government. If they do attack but fail to defeat ECOMOG/GOSL, in the absence of a peace agreement, both sides would possibly use the rainy season to prepare for the next round of hostilities in the fall.

ECOMOG

ECOMOG barely escaped a disastrous defeat and ejection from Freetown in January 1999, a fact that has seriously affected the morale of the organization. There have just been major changes in the hierarchy of ECOMOG (to include a new commander, Major-General Felix Mujakperuo). Both the GOSL and ECOMOG troop contributing nations hope these changes will provide the necessary spark for the organization to recover lost ground, both literally and figuratively.

ECOMOG is a multinational force consisting of troops from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali, with the overwhelming majority of ECOMOG troops coming from Nigeria. Both President Kabbah and the GOSL Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), a Nigerian soldier, Brigadier-General Mitikishe Maxwell Khobe, describes ECOMOG relations with the GOSL as cordial . That

said, the conduct of ECOMOG troops witnessed in Freetown was at times heavy-handed. There were, however, no overt signs of human rights abuses by ECOMOG forces, and the alleged incidents of human rights abuses cited in the recent UN report were flatly denied by both ECOMOG and President Kabbah.

There are signs of tension within the alliance. Relations with the CDF, or Kamajors, appear to be deteriorating. Reliant on ECOMOG for logistical support, the CDF apparently retain a good working relationship with the Guinean contingent of ECOMOG, but their relationship with the Nigerian contingent can best be described as strained. In Freetown, the CDF and ECOMOG now operate their own check points, rather than jointly as was past practice, and there are rumours of overt hostility between the two groups in GOSL/ECOMOG controlled areas outside of Freetown.

As well, there have been some problems with integrating the various contingents into ECOMOG. Upon deployment the Ghanaian contingent, presently guarding Lungi Airport, apparently had some difficulties with initial ECOMOG attempts to employ the contingent piecemeal throughout Freetown and vicinity. They also raised concerns that the entire command structure of ECOMOG was Nigerian. This situation has been addressed and continues to evolve. The Deputy Commander of ECOMOG is a Ghanaian officer, as is one of the senior operations officers in HQ ECOMOG, and all indications are that ECOMOG is making every effort to integrate its various national contingents into the command structure as the Nigerians become more comfortable with coalition operations.

ECOMOG supports the GOSL two-track policy for peace in Sierra Leone, with track one being negotiations and track two being the establishment of a favourable security situation for these negotiations. (This two-track approach will be described in greater detail later in this report). However, if ECOMOG is to achieve any success in the security track, they will require extensive logistical support. At present this support is provided by a private American firm, Pacific Architecture and Engineering (PA&E). Funded almost entirely by the US government, PA&E provides an effective infrastructure and delivery capacity and significant non-lethal logistical support (i.e., fuel and rations), but overall is insufficient to support the types of operations envisaged by ECOMOG and the GOSL.

ECOMOG and the new Sierra Leone Army (SLA) need significant infusions of logistical support, both lethal and non-lethal, if they are to have any hope of success in executing the security track of the GOSL two-track strategy. Requirements for the SLA will be addressed later in this section. For ECOMOG, all contingents require materiel to fight, move and communicate activities that they can barely undertake at this time.

More specifically, they need small arms ammunition, light and medium support weapons and ammunition (60mm and 81mm mortars), hand held anti-tank weapons (RPG-7 type) and grenades. They also need transportation equipment, ranging from small trucks to helicopters, the latter being necessary for movement up country where the road systems have been destroyed. Finally, they need the requisite communications means, from the sub-tactical to the Task Force

level, to permit them to exercise effective command and control of military operations. In addition to all this, they also need continued support with other essential but non-lethal commodities such as rations and medical supplies. Without significant logistical support in these types of materiel, future ECOMOG/GOSL operations will be severely hampered. A list of the requirements to support operations for a three-month period are attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

Government of Sierra Leone

As mentioned above, the GOSL is pursuing a two-track strategy for peace. In addition to their support of ECOMOG, they are also working towards the re-establishment of the new SLA. The GOSL CDS had originally planned for a new SLA of 10,000 troops. However, the Parliament of Sierra Leone only authorized a strength of 5,000 which the UK has undertaken to train and equip (details of the UK training initiative are discussed later in this section).

There are a myriad of problems facing the new SLA, some of the more important ones being recruitment, employment, intelligence and logistical support. There are two dimensions to the recruiting issue. The first is whether the approximately 2,000 demobilized members of the former Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL) should be re-integrated into the new SLA and, if so, how to go about doing that. The second concerns the Kamajors and their future in the new SLA. Their leader, Paramount Chief Hinga Norman, would like to see as many of his followers integrated into the new SLA. However, the Nigerians are not at all keen to have a significant portion of the new SLA coming from the Kamajors. The percentage of the recruits presently undergoing training who are from the former AFRSL is not known at this time, but there are few, if any, former Kamajors amongst this first group of recruits.

Employment of the new SLA has also been a somewhat contentious issue. The CDS of the GOSL and ECOMOG wanted to take these troops, give them a bare minimum of training and then, armed with the weapons and ammunition provided by the UK for training the new SLA, ship them off to Waterloo, a town at the base of the Freetown peninsula which also happens to be the forward edge of the GOSL/ECOMOG controlled part of the country. The UK did not agree with this plan of action, and as of the end of March 1999 had suspended training activities with the new SLA and halted a shipment of arms and ammunition destined for the new SLA. These activities have since recommenced.

Both GOSL officials and the CDS bemoaned the lack of intelligence available to them and requested assistance in this area. GOSL officials stated that the UK and US have indicated an interest in helping with the intelligence issue, but this has yet to be independently corroborated. They seem to have absolute faith in the high-tech intelligence capacity they believe the West possesses. Interestingly, they also seem to ignore the considerable indigenous resources available to them (for instance the Kamajors and other parties and groups loyal to the government) and the potential that exists for training the new SLA in intelligence and information management.

The most serious problem facing the new SLA is equipment and logistics. It has virtually nothing. As stated earlier, the UK has undertaken to train and equip a 5,000-man force with basic weapons, clothing and personal equipment. However, they still need ammunition, light and medium support weapons, transportation and communications equipment. A detailed list of the requirements for a new SLA are attached at Appendix 5 to this report.

Other Factors Friends and Foes

RUF

Although still fundamentally a bush army, the RUF remains a formidable foe. They are well armed and very wily. In December, for instance, they smuggled arms into Freetown in caskets as part of funeral processions which they buried and then dug up just prior to the January attack on the city. More recently, they are now beginning to show sophistication in weaponry and tactics not previously seen.

The RUF still rely largely on hit and run tactics, moving quickly by foot on bush trails to strike at unarmed villages or lightly protected targets of opportunity. They still use terror and mutilation as a weapon, and do not hesitate to use women and children as human shields in their operations. However, their last offensive into Freetown demonstrated a significant capacity to command, control and coordinate rapid offensive operations using a combination of pre-planned operations and good communications at various levels of operation.

Of particular significance is their newly demonstrated ability to site and place obstacles. ECOMOG engineers have reportedly encountered and cleared well-sited antipersonnel minefields (as opposed to scattered nuisance minefields) in the Freetown peninsula as well as anti-tank minefields between Lungi and Port Loko whose purpose was quite obviously to deny and/or canalize ECOMOG movements. ECOMOG personnel have also reported sightings of anti-tank ditches directly east of the Freetown peninsula that appeared to be professionally sited and constructed and, in some instances, covered by fire.

There is little reliable information on the morale of the RUF. There continue to be rumours that some of the former SLA soldiers who joined the RUF are now ready to come home, but there has been no wholesale defection of rebels to the GOSL recently.

Finally, it has been reported that the RUF are in possession of several anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) platforms (12.7mm and 14.5mm) and are beginning to show signs of deploying them together in mutual support as opposed to single platforms or using them in a ground support role. Perhaps of even greater significance is a report that the RUF has captured several SA-7 shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missile systems. This information has not been corroborated. However, if this is true, and the RUF begin to employ a gun-missile mix in support of their ground operations, they will possess a significant anti-air capability and will have taken the first steps in the evolution from bush army to an embryonic conventional force.

Guinea

Apart from Sierra Leone itself, of all the nations in the region Guinea is arguably the one most affected by the conflict. From a pure military standpoint, Guinea has been supporting its ECOMOG operations in both Sierra Leone and Liberia on its own for almost seven years. When war erupted in Sierra Leone, Guinea, a francophone nation, not only provided a battalion to a predominantly anglophone ECOMOG, but also was required to deploy the better part of its military ground forces as well as police resources to secure its border with Sierra Leone. This has placed considerable strain on both the financial resources and security infrastructure of Guinea.

As will be detailed in the humanitarian section of this report, there are approximately 400,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia in Guinea. This influx of humanity and the fact that most of the refugee camps are very close to the border have presented Guinea with almost insurmountable security problems, both external and internal. Externally, these refugees are now the targets of increasingly regular rebel attacks (usually coincidental with food deliveries in the camps). Internally, Guinean security forces are all but overwhelmed with an increase in criminal activity - in volume, in types of crime and in levels of violence - in both the regions of the refugee camps and the capital city of Conakry, which Guinean security officials largely attribute to the influx of refugees from both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

CDF/Kamajors

The CDF/Kamajors (their active strength is unofficially estimated at approximately 35,000) generally operate outside of Freetown and exercise varying degrees of control over areas in the south and southeastern part of the country. They can be an effective fighting force, as demonstrated in their recent (07 April 1999) recapture of the eastern town of Bunumbu. Their command stucture is, however, somewhat less structured than a traditional military force, and coordination with ECOMOG is at best marginal. There are reports of occasional Kamajor dealings with the rebels at the local level and of friction with ECOMOG forces. The CDF/Kamajors are largely reliant on ECOMOG for logistical support and have claimed on numerous occasions in the past that they have deliberately been the last to receive material and other forms of support.

The relationship between President Kabbah, the head of the Kamajors (and Deputy Minister of Defence) Paramount Chief Hinga Norman and ECOMOG are reportedly not very good. In addition to being concerned about the sporadic nature of ECOMOG logistical support and the issue of integration of the CDF/Kamajors into the new SLA discussed earlier, the Kamajors are deeply suspicious of perceived Nigerian regional hegemonic designs and commensurate attempts to isolate their organization from future influence in the Sierra Leone government. Thus, post-conflict demobilization and disarmament of the Kamajors could well be a potential future security concern.

Foreign Troops and Mercenaries

The presence of troops from neighbouring countries of the sub-region in support of the rebels as well as foreign mercenaries has had a significant impact on the nature of the conflict in Sierra Leone. In the case of the former, this has provided the rebels with experienced fighters, and in the latter case it may be manifesting itself in training as well as the provision of logistical support.

There is ample evidence that Liberian fighters are an integral part of the rebel force and that the rebels have been receiving substantial support from Liberia and President Charles Taylor. There are no accurate numbers, but they appear to comprise a significant part of RUF field commander Sam Bockarie s forces that are operating in the south of Sierra Leone. The Liberian Government at first denied the involvement of its nationals in the Sierra Leone conflict, but have since admitted that there are Liberians fighting on the side of the RUF, albeit without official Liberian government support or backing. All information indicates that they are involved both in combat operations as well as in the provision of logistical support and the trafficking of small arms.

There were also widespread allegations of the involvement of troops from Burkina Faso in rebel operations, but these allegations have proven somewhat difficult to substantiate. Sources from ECOMOG vary drastically in their views on Burkinabè involvement, with some saying that two of every ten captured rebels are Burkinabè, whereas others claim that no Burkinabè troops have been captured. There seems to be strong evidence of Burkinabè complicity in the shipment of small arms to the rebels, and it is therefore possible to speculate that in support of this operation there may have been Burkinabè military personnel deployed in Sierra Leone. To date, however, there has been little hard evidence of the involvement of Burkinabè combat troops in the Sierra Leone conflict.

There is also compelling evidence that there are foreign mercenaries operating with the rebels. Since the return to power of the Kabbah government, most foreign mercenary involvement appears to have been limited to the provision and delivery of small arms both into and within Sierra Leone, using small planes and helicopters. Nationals from the Ukraine have apparently been the most active in this area, and all parties visited by the Canadian delegation unanimously cited their involvement. There were also uncorroborated reports of nationals from France and Angola being seen in the country connected with shipments of small arms. Recent information, however, points to the distinct possibility that foreign mercenaries may now be involved in limited training of rebel forces, and again the Ukrainians were named by various sources as being part of this effort. It is not known at this time whether the Government of the Ukraine is aware of the level of involvement of its nationals in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

Finally, there is the possibility that private security firms, which are likely still operating in the diamond mining regions of the country, may be providing some form of training to the rebels as part of a cooperative deal with them. This is all but impossible to verify given the lack of access to this region.

UK

The UK had undertaken to arm, equip and train a 10,000 strong army for the GOSL. The original plan was to create a three-brigade force, with each brigade having three infantry battalions. As discussed above, this figure has subsequently been reduced to 5,000 and there are now approximately 2,500 troops undergoing basic training for the new SLA. There is at present a seven-person UK Army training team in Sierra Leone setting up and conducting this training.

The first shipment of 2,500 uniforms, 2,500 rifles and 2.5 million rounds of 7.62mm ammunition for the new SLA was recently delivered. The UK plan to provide personal weapons and some battalion level weapons, to include light support weapons (i.e. light and medium machine guns and 60mm mortars) for the new SLA.

The UK has also recently decided to provide both lethal and non-lethal support for ECOMOG to support their continued operations for a period of three months, a change in their policy from the recent past. Types of support now being considered for ECOMOG includes vehicles and ammunition for mortars and small arms.

US

The US is becoming increasingly active both in the Sierra Leone conflict and the sub-region. The US ambassador to Sierra Leone, Joseph Melrose, still resides in Conakry but has regular and close contact with both President Kabbah and the presidential National Security Advisor. As well, there was a high level visit to Guinea of senior officials from Washington that coincided with the visit of our delegation.

US support for security has been solely through PA&E, the private US firm providing logistic support to ECOMOG. The US government has provided over 2 million $US to PA&E for non-lethal support. As well, the US has provided training for ECOMOG troop contributors under the auspices of their African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI).

The US government is also now actively considering the provision of significant support to Guinea in three areas: environmental protection, anti-terrorist assistance for Guinean internal security forces and military equipment and supplies for 1,000 Guinean soldiers. This will include soft support items such as boots, uniforms and helmets, hard support items such as vehicles, and lethal items such as weapons and ammunition.

UNOMSIL

The United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) was established on 13 June 1998 and its mandate has been extended to 13 June 1999. UNOMSIL staff was significantly reduced following the rebel attacks in January 1999, but have since been slowly increased as the security situation improved. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Mr.

Francis Okelo, has just recently returned to Freetown with some of his staff. His activities and those of the civilian component of UNOMSIL are described later in this report.

The military component of UNOMSIL was mandated to monitor the military and security situation in the country as a whole; monitor the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants concentrated in secure areas of the country including the role of ECOMOG in the provision of security and in the collection and destruction of arms in those secure areas; assist in monitoring respect for international humanitarian law including at disarmament and demobilization sites; and monitor the voluntary disarmament and demobilization of members of the Civil Defence Forces. At its peak, it consisted of a total of 61 uniformed personnel, including five civilian police monitors.

In January 1999, the UNOMSIL military component was reduced to eight personnel who were moved to Conakry with the intention to return to Sierra Leone as soon as the security situation permitted. They have recently returned to Freetown with the Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General Subhash Joshi of India. If the security situation allows, the UN plans to increase that number to 14 military observers and one human rights monitor.

UNOMSIL activities have been severely restricted due to the security situation and their reduced numbers. They are, at present, an organization without a job. Prior to their departure, the military observers had good working relations with ECOMOG and many of their current efforts are focussed on re-establishing those relations. Brigadier-General Joshi has as well made numerous personal interventions with the rebels, and appears to be dedicated to committing his scarce resources to support the peace process.

Other Security Issues

The Diamond Connection

There are two vital pillars of support for rebel forces in Sierra Leone the support provided by Liberia in the procurement and provision of small arms and the financial support to the rebels provided by the diamond trade. There are three important characteristics of this diamond trade. The first is how lucrative this trade is and the amount of money it generates for the rebels. With estimates of the annual value of the diamond trade at approximately $300 million, diamonds are the financial fuel for rebel forces. The second is how very little is known about the mining and trading of Sierra Leone diamonds. Finally, given these two factors, it perhaps should not come as a great surprise to discover just how little is being done by the international community to deal with this crucial source of income for rebel forces.

According to President Kabbah, this frustrating lack of knowledge is partially attributable to the actions of former regimes in Sierra Leone. For huge sums of money, previous governments sold a large number of diamond concessions to numerous international mining companies along with a promise not to interfere in their business. As a result, these rather shadowy companies are now

firmly entrenched in the diamond mining regions, with well-established communications and transportation networks. The nature of their relationship with rebel forces is not known. It is believed that private security firms protect many diamond mining companies. They will likely prove to be difficult to move out of the way to make room for the reforms in the industry envisaged by GOSL. That said, it is interesting to note that no one with whom our delegation met viewed any form of immediate military operations to recapture or control the diamond mining region as in any way feasible.

Of particular interest is the fact that diamonds from this region are apparently quite unique and can readily be identified as coming from Sierra Leone. Moreover, they are very easy to transport hence moving them to markets, legally or otherwise, is not a major problem. As well, the diamonds in Sierra Leone are alluvial and thus relatively easy to acquire.

The diamonds and the revenues they generate fund appear to move through a network of middlemen of Lebanese descent who are now indigenous to the region and have been involved in the diamond industry for over 60 years. Sierra Leone diamonds have allegedly turned up on the diamond markets of Beirut as recently as March 1999. Little, if any, action has been taken to control or regulate the trade of Sierra Leone diamonds, which has permitted rebel forces to re-arm and re-equip themselves with new and modern weaponry not often seen in a bush army.

Trafficking in Small Arms

There is ample evidence to show that several nations in the sub-region are heavily involved in the procurement and transfer of small arms and ammunition to the conflict in Sierra Leone, and that this trade is closely linked to the diamond mining industry in Sierra Leone.

It appears that arms are procured in eastern Europe (either Bulgaria or Ukraine) and moved to Tripoli, Libya where they are transferred to ships or charter aircraft for shipment into the region. Air shipments are staged through Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and then continue on to Liberia, where they are transferred to smaller aircraft or trucks for delivery into rebel-held territory in Sierra Leone.

Both Liberia and Burkina Faso have denied any involvement in the trafficking of small arms, but solid evidence exists that firmly implicates both nations. In late March, 1999 there was an air shipment (in a Ukrainian chartered aircraft) of over 68 tonnes of small arms that was recently delivered to Sam Bockarie in southeastern Sierra Leone. This shipment was flown to Ouagadougou, where the aircraft sat for several days on the presidential tarmac, as the Ukrainian crew refused to fly to Monrovia, saying their job was to simply deliver the arms to Burkina Faso. The shipment was transferred to another aircraft and flown to Monrovia, where it was subsequently delivered to Bockarie in Sierra Leone. This latest shipment was announced by ECOMOG on April 8, 1999, but our delegation had been made aware of its existence during its trip to the region.

Libyan involvement seems to be more as a conduit as opposed to a source of small arms. Both Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh were trained in Libya, but given the fact that there is a ready source of income, it is unlikely that Libya is providing their services for free. It is interesting to note that it appears there are no arms going into Sierra Leone through Guinea. The Guinean armed forces have apparently effectively sealed their borders to all but the smallest of smugglers, but at a tremendous cost to that small nation.

The small arms issue has recently taken on added gravity. The recent (08 April 1999) threat by the ECOMOG commander to launch air strikes into Liberia and Burkina Faso if the flow of small arms into Sierra Leone through those two nations is not curbed immediately is a new and highly volatile dimension of this conflict with region-wide and perhaps global implications.

Police

Sierra Leone

The other critical dimension of security for the GOSL is civilian police. The capacity of the Sierra Leone police was virtually destroyed during the rebel offensive in January 1999. An estimated 200-300 police officers were murdered by the attacking RUF, and the Sierra Leone Police Headquarters was totally destroyed. The Police Academy in the town of Hastings, just south of Freetown, was also apparently destroyed.

There is a police presence on the ground in Freetown but no police activity outside the capital city was reported. Police duties in Freetown appear to be restricted to unarmed traffic control and manning (along with armed ECOMOG soldiers) some but not all of the myriad of roadblocks in the city. Although contact with Sierra Leone police officials was severely limited, it appeared evident that the police presently do not possess the capability to conduct anything but the most rudimentary of police tasks. They did not seem to have any form of criminal investigative, counter-drug or anti-fraud capacity. They also lack the means and ability to provide training in any of the aforementioned police skills. As well, like the new SLA, the Sierra Leone Police do not have any of the equipment needed by a police force.

There did not appear to be concerted effort to train or restructure the Sierra Leone police force all efforts seemed focussed on the military. President Kabbah did say that he has approached the Commonwealth for assistance in strengthening the police force, not only in police skills but personnel matters such as recruiting. Last fall, the Commonwealth provided a needs assessment for the police (an RCMP officer participated as a member of the Commonwealth team) and was also involved in the provision of training and equipment for the Sierra Leone police. Any future Commonwealth police training will, however, likely have to wait until the security situation has improved.

Guinea

As stated earlier, Guinea has borne the brunt of the exodus of refugees from both the Sierra Leone and Liberian conflict, and this has caused serious external and internal security problems for this small and impoverished country. The Guinean authorities have a clear understanding of the external threat and have reacted by strengthening their border security, which has stretched their military forces to their very limit. However, what they were not prepared for was the staggering increase in crime not only in volume but in the variety of crimes as well as the associated levels of violence - that they believe is directly linked to the dramatic increase in the refugee population in Guinea.

The needs of the Guinean police force are significant. They require not only general logistical support (communications equipment and vehicles) but also specialized equipment such as fingerprint kits, special equipment to protect them from criminal weapons (vests and helmets) and drug testing equipment. Perhaps of even greater importance is their need for training. They require instruction in most modern police skills, ranging from crime detection to investigation to prevention. They need to train policemen and police trainers. Moreover, this training must be conducted in French.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the outset of this section of this report, the conflict in Sierra Leone is extremely complex and inextricably linked to the security of the entire West African sub-region. Indeed, the complex nature of this deadly regional conflict, combined with the limited duration of our delegation s visit, precludes the formulation of thorough and in-depth conclusions. That said, it is certainly possible to draw three very general conclusions about the situation in Sierra Leone.

First, it is safe to conclude that currently there is no peace to keep in Sierra Leone, and therefore no role for a peacekeeping force or operation. Granted, there is at present a bit of a lull in the action, but it is not peace. Unless there is a military victory (unlikely) or a negotiated armistice or peace agreement, the military mission of the GOSL and ECOMOG (a war fighting or counter insurgency operation) will remain unchanged. Only if hostilities were to cease could a peacekeeping or peace support operation be contemplated.

Second, it is evident that there is no purely military solution to the Sierra Leone conflict. Further, the GOSL two-track policy is the course of action that, with goodwill and good faith, has the best chance of success.

Finally, without adequate security, none of the activities so desperately needed in Sierra Leone - political, humanitarian or economic can take place. Any potential Canadian initiatives in the security sector should accordingly concentrate on enhancing security in Sierra Leone in two ways the provision of political support and/or pressure aimed at reducing external support for or

involvement with rebel forces, and the provision of materiel and/or training support to ECOMOG troop contributing nations and the GOSL.

PART 3 - HUMANITARIAN

The scope of the humanitarian tragedy in Sierra Leone is absolutely staggering. Eight years of war has resulted in 75,000 dead. As mentioned above, a horribly destructive rebel offensive on Freetown in January has virtually completed the disintegration of this tiny, impoverished nation of 4.2 million. The state structure of Sierra Leone and the democratically elected government of President Kabbah are hanging by a thread. The country has been traumatized by violence, human rights abuses and atrocities on a massive scale. Very large portions of the population are now relying on international assistance for the provision of the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clean water and medicine. And as horrendous as the human tragedy is now, it could get worse.

One of the problems in understanding the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone is that the country has effectively been divided into two areas. As mentioned above, the Freetown peninsula and a few of the major towns are controlled by the GOSL, ECOMOG or the Kamajors. The rest of the country is under varying degrees of control by the RUF or other rebel factions. In the words of a Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) report released at the end of March: *The real tragedy of Sierra Leone may not be the horrors already reported, but those as yet unreported from the interior, and which could be taking place at this moment. In a country of already scant resources, malnutrition and disease are serious threats, particularly for the children. Sadly, but bluntly, neither MSF nor anyone else really knows what is going on inside much of Sierra Leone today.*

The two principal challenges facing humanitarian actors in Sierra Leone are the questions of security and of access to those in need, particularly the displaced who are by far the most vulnerable. In fact, the United Nations agencies estimate that over one million Sierra Leoneans have been displaced. Other relief agencies such as MSF suggest that the figure is much higher, between one and three million. In any country, the movement of these numbers of people would be disastrous. In Sierra Leone, the poorest country in the world according to the United Nations, it has produced indescribable suffering.

The hard statistics of Sierra Leone s refugees and internally displaced persons cannot convey the personal misery of this national nightmare. According to the most recent report of the Secretary General to the United Nations Security Council after eight years of war, there are now 700,000 people internally displaced within Sierra Leone - 250,000 of whom are in Freetown. In addition, there are 400,00 refugees in Guinea and another 100,000 in Liberia. The most recent fighting in January resulted in thousands of additional refugees in Guinea. While it is very difficult to get a precise figure, officials at the UNHCR and the Government of Guinea are in the process of trying to conduct a census of refugees.

During our stay in Guinea, our delegation travelled to the southern border of Guinea and Sierra Leone to visit the sprawling refugee camp at Forecariah. We were surprised to find Liberian refugees in this camp, who had fled from their own country to Sierra Leone, only to have to flee

the latter. In Guinea, the situation is complicated by the movement of some Sierra Leonean refugees back across the border during the day to farm their lands, returning to the safety of the camps in Guinea by night. Also, many Sierra Leoneans are now living with relatives in Guinea and, as a result, are not officially registered. This massive influx of refugees has placed an unmanageable financial burden on Guinea, which is also one of the poorest countries in Africa.

Most importantly from a humanitarian standpoint, since the January offensive by the RUF, virtually all international relief workers have evacuated the interior of Sierra Leone because of security concerns. In addition, most relief activities by national staff have also ceased. There is a very serious concern on behalf of agencies operating in Sierra Leone that the fundamental principles of humanitarian law and respect for human rights are not being observed. Foremost among these is the principle of access to those who are in need of assistance and that of political neutrality, the strict non-involvement by the relief agency on one side or another.

In recent months, there have been serious problems between ECOMOG and some relief agencies, namely the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which was expelled from Sierra Leone in mid-January. ECOMOG claimed that the careless use of two-way radios by the ICRC gave away the positions of some of their soldiers and resulted in 20 Nigerian casualties. The ICRC has strongly denied the accusation. As a result of the ICRC controversy, the Government placed serious restrictions on the use of communications equipment which NGO s insist they need for logistic and security reasons. Also, ECOMOG has not facilitated access to the interior by relief agencies. Although the communications equipment issue appears to be in the process of being resolved, there remains a considerable amount of distrust between the Government authorities, ECOMOG and the NGO community.

As a result of the adverse security environment in rebel held areas, there is evidence that suggests assistance provided by non-governmental organizations is in some instances being diverted or stolen by the rebels. This had led to Government concerns that food and medicine are not reaching those in need, and has unfortunately added to the Government s suspicion of NGO efforts.

While there have been problems between the Govemment, ECOMOG and the NGO community with respect to the delivery of relief assistance, it must be emphasized in the strongest possible terms that the primary responsibility for the humanitarian disaster currently taking place lies with the RUF and their supporters. The complete and utter disregard by the rebel forces of any of the most basic rules of warfare or humanitarian law has left the civilian population in the interior of the country, especially those in the north and the east, completely vulnerable.

While the humanitarian assistance needs of Freetown have generally been well-defined, many of the needs in the hinterland outside of Bo and Kenema are largely unknown. If and when the security situation improves as ECOMOG is able to extend the areas over which it has authority, it is very likely that the humanitarian needs will significantly increase as aid agencies discover what are expected to be conditions of extreme hardship. In some areas, the problem of starvation

is real. Whether it is food aid, medicine, shelter, assistance for amputees, women and children, it is very probable that the humanitarian requirements will be enormous.

Although there has been considerable bilateral aid (see Appendix 7), the results of the UN Consolidated Appeal for Sierra Leone has been underwhelming. The appeal requested $27.9 million U.S. dollars in funding but has to date received only four million dollars.

The Shelter Problem

A very serious shelter crisis is emerging in Freetown which is based on two factors. First, a tremendous number of Sierra Leoneans have sought refuge in Freetown as a result of the conflict. Indeed, Freetown is one of the few safe havens in Sierra Leone. Second, the RUF attack on Freetown in January resulted in the devastation of large parts of the eastern areas of Freetown near the Wellington Industrial Park and the Kissy area. The crowded urban landscape of Freetown the fact that there seems to be an extraordinary number of people on the streets - is perhaps the most visible evidence that Freetown s infrastructure is strained to the breaking point in terms of handling this additional population. A complicating element is the impending onset of the rainy season.

The United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that between 65-80 percent of the homes in the east of Freetown were destroyed. Our delegation toured the eastern areas of Freetown where we saw the massive destruction - burned out and destroyed homes and businesses - that the rebels had caused. Although eastern Freetown was hit hardest, there were pockets of devastation from the eastern edges of the city through to the centre. Only areas in the western portion of Freetown, which the Nigerian troops in ECOMOG held throughout the fighting in January, remain without damage.

While the number of internally displaced persons in Freetown is estimated at 250,000 people, it is extremely difficult to determine a precise number. Many of the internally displaced have sought accommodation with relatives, neighbours and friends. While some facilities in Freetown, such as the stadium, housed as many as 64,000 people during the January attack, that number has been reduced to 5,000. The National Workshops, an old railway repair facility, houses approximately 13,000. The balance of the internally displaced in Freetown are in other smaller facilities or have been absorbed in this city which now has at least one million people.

The visit our delegation made to the National Stadium was instructive in helping us understand the challenges faced by the relief personnel in the provision of shelter. Our group was met by the stadium camp administrator, who accompanied us on a brief tour. There were children all over. During the day, blankets, towels and clothes were hung everywhere. The vast majority of people who are housed here sleep on towels or blankets under the seating area on the bare concrete. While we were there, some people were eating their noon meal, which consisted of corn meal, eaten from plastic bowls and without utensils.

There is a medical clinic in one of the rooms in the stadium and some limited special facilities have been put in place for pregnant women and new mothers. There is a birthing area and a room with a few extra blankets on the floor for mothers and their newborns. When our group went through, there were probably about a dozen new mothers. The doctors at the clinic must deal with many illnesses, but the most common appear to be children s ailments - measles, malnourishment and diarrhea. In regard to the problem of diarrhea, which is one of the leading killers of young children, the clinic is equipped to provide rehydration therapy. As many as 2,000 children have undergone rehydration therapy. Surprisingly, given the large number of people who had and were using the stadium for shelter over a three-month period, only one fatality occurred. The doctor who accompanied the delegation told us of a stillborn child who was delivered only a few hours before our group arrived.

While the concrete facilities at the National Stadium appeared tidy but uncomfortable for the masses of people that have called them home over the last three months, the National Workshops are cramped, dusty, dirty and squalid. Built earlier this century as maintenance sheds for Sierra Leone s long gone railway locomotives and cars, these facilities looked as though they have not been in service for decades.

Slightly larger than a community hockey arena, these workshops were home to about 13,000 people. When the fighting broke out in Freetown in January, some of the people who arrived at this facility had fled from other internally displaced persons camps in other areas of Sierra Leone. Our delegation was told that some had been housed in two, three and, in some cases, four other camps. When they arrived, there was one tap, which produced hardly more than a trickle of water and one lime pit toilet for 9,000 people. The provision of food, water and sanitation has since improved significantly at the workshops since they were first established.

We were advised that one of the most difficult aspects of the camp, especially for the women, was the complete absence of privacy. As our group walked through this facility, it was not unusual to see a family of five or six people occupying a space about three metres by three metres. It is very difficult to understand how these people have sustained this lifestyle for the past three months. It is bare subsistence, nothing else. As with the National Stadium, our group noted the tremendous number of children everywhere.

Efforts are being made to construct new shelters adjacent to the National Workshops and in eight other areas around Freetown. While we were not in a position to see the other areas where new shelters are being constructed, the progress at the National Workshops certainly appears slow. These new shelters are constructed with long poles about 7-10 cm in diameter. The frame is covered with a plastic sheeting and in some cases the structure sits on a concrete base. Opaque plastic dividers separate spaces of approximately three metres by three metres. Some of the ones that we saw had merely a dirt floor, but we were told that gravel would be used to ensure proper drainage and to keep the floor dry. Suffice it to say that those of us who saw the shelters are somewhat sceptical that they will be sufficiently durable and rainproof to withstand the torrential rains that Sierra Leone can expect next month.

The plans of the OCHA for shelter at the National Workshops and the eight other camp sites show only enough shelter for 16,800 people. However, at the present time, approximately 50,000 families are targeted for shelter and non-food assistance in Freetown and areas in the hinterland such as Bo, Kenema and Kambia. Since February, the U.S. Office of Foreign Development Assistance has provided approximately 1,600 rolls of plastic sheeting and 50,000 blankets which has the potential to provide shelter and non-food items to about 10,000 families. However, it is going to take a herculean effort by all concerned to ensure that the population of Freetown has adequate shelter with the onset of the rainy season.

In addition to the basic shelter needs, our group also heard a plea for additional non-food assistance. In particular, officials with the National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (NCRRR) told us that there is an urgent need for household items - goods such as cooking utensils, pots, pans, bowls, dishes, plates, cutlery and soap well as jerry cans for water. It was also apparent to us that, if possible, cots would be far preferable to sleeping mats in these shelters especially in the rainy season.

In the longer term, the housing stock of much of the eastern portion of Freetown must be rebuilt. During our tour of the devastated eastern sections, we did see evidence of reconstruction. Residents are struggling against the deadline that the rainy season imposes. Mud bricks are being used to build small new shelters although it appears that many types of building material such as tin for roofing, windows, etc. may be in short supply. Access to credit in order to acquire loans for rebuilding has also been very restricted as only a very small number of banks have re-opened since the fighting in January. Interestingly, during our meeting with President Kabbah, he mentioned Canada s expertise in the area of pre-fab low-cost housing and spoke of Maurice Strong s involvement in the UN Habitat project. He added that We don t want it for free, but need repayments organized over several years.

Amputees

While it is hoped that the serious shelter problem in Sierra Leone can be addressed with building materials and financial resources, some of the physical and emotional scars that are borne by the men, women and children of Sierra Leone will be present for generations. The practice of amputating and mutilating civilians has become the trademark of the RUF, their calling card. As a terror tactic, the practice began in the early 90 s but seemed to have attracted international attention during the first free democratic elections in 1996. To discourage people from voting during those elections, RUF leader Foday Sankoh issued orders to his men to cut off the hands of people who had cast a ballot. (Those who had voted received an ink mark on their hands.) The tactic was not successful. Often voting at great personal risk to themselves, the people eventually elected President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. For those in the rural areas, the amputations were particularly cruel since they destroyed the livelihoods of many rural subsistence farmers who were rendered incapable of working the soil.

MSF currently reports treating hundreds of civilians who have had one or more hands, arms, legs or ears amputated by rebel forces. Many of the victims are young children, even some infants. It was also noted that instances of amputations and mutilations by the rebels increased dramatically when they were forced to retreat from Freetown in January. MSF has also publicly stated that their experience in 1998 indicates that for every amputee victim who makes it to hospital, there are several others who never receive medical care and die from their wounds.

A visit to the Connaught Hospital in Freetown and the ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) amputee camp at Murray Town brought our delegation face to face with the horrible atrocities this conflict has produced. The ADRA camp contained about 250 amputees as well as other family members who had fled areas in the interior of the country that had come under rebel attack. At the camp, our delegation was met by the assistant administrator and escorted on a tour of the camp by a spokesperson chosen from among the amputees - a young man in his early twenties.

The camp s accommodation consists of mud dwellings, old sheds and some new plastic shelters which had been constructed, similar to the ones we had seen at the National Workshops. The camp spokesman explained to us how he had become a victim. He said that he was from the north of Sierra Leone, but that he was studying in the eastern area of the country when the rebels arrived. In addition to robbing and looting the area, the rebels inflicted death and mutilation upon the inhabitants. They then demanded that the young man s uncle hold his arm while they chopped it off. When the uncle refused, they shot him. These rebels severed the young man s right arm with a machete about half way between his elbow and his wrist. His right ear was also sliced off.

The camp administrator led us outside where the young man explained the purpose of our visit to the amputees and their families. It was here that our delegation saw a little girl four years old probably the youngest amputee victim in the camp. The RUF rebels had cut this little girl s arm off at the shoulder. She was accompanied by both parents each of whom had a hand chopped off. The horrific brutality that was inflicted on that poor child and her parents is in many ways symbolic of the nihilistic violence that has brought Sierra Leone to the brink of complete destruction.

A few hours later, our delegation was at the Connaught Hospital in the centre of Freetown. There were another fifty amputees, male and female, being treated in two wards. Dr. Kamara, the chief surgeon of the hospital and a nurse matron accompanied us with a TV crew from a local station. The doctor explained to the patients in Krio that our delegation was from Canada and that our mission was to assess the condition of the people in Sierra Leone, so that Canada could provide assistance.

The doctor also explained that during the crisis in January Connaught Hospital was flooded with victims. The hospital has 250 beds, but treated upwards of 350 people when the fighting broke out. Amputees and people with gunshot wounds were treated in some cases on the grass in the

little courtyard. Our delegation observed bed after bed of young and old with bandaged limbs and blank stares. It is in the faces of the people who have been the victims of this tragedy that one sees utter despair like the man whose both hands had been cut off by the rebels.

Judging from the age and gender of those occupying the hospital beds, there appeared to be no rhyme or reason to who was chosen as a victim. The violence certainly appeared to be completely indiscriminate. Once again, our delegation saw more evidence of the victimization of children another little girl with her left leg amputated a few inches above her knee. She was about eight years old. The doctor advised that the youngest amputee he had treated was two and a half years of age.

It is difficult to determine with any precision the number of amputees in Freetown or indeed Sierra Leone as a whole. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the number in the Freetown area is between 1,000 and 1,500. There are also hundreds of amputees among the refugee population who have fled Sierra Leone. Because of the state of medical care in the country, reliable statistics are virtually non-existent.

Although we were advised that the situation concerning the amputees would improve with the provision of prosthetics by groups like Handicap International (HI), our delegation does not recall seeing one prosthetic device while touring either the camp or the hospital. At a meeting of the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) in Brussels at the end of March, it was noted by HI that whatever service was being delivered in Freetown was being done on an *ad hoc* basis by non-experts because of security limitations. The problem is particularly difficult for children, who, because they are growing, need to be refitted periodically with new devices. In addition, it is also extremely important that psychological assistance be provided to the victims of atrocities at the earliest opportunity.

Food Aid

A March 15 assessment of the food supply in Sierra Leone contained in a report by the OCHA stated that *unless food security agencies are given access to get the population started on food production, the country is likely to slide further into a major food emergency in the coming months.* The report goes on to say that: *The outlook for agricultural input is grim given the present circumstances. End of year projections in 1998 by food agencies in Sierra Leone forecasted a yearly requirement of 483,000 metric tons for the entire population. Approximately half of this was to come from commercial imports, 17 percent from food aid, ten percent from milled rice from the 1997-98 harvest with a projected 23 percent food deficit.*

These projections have been overtaken by events to the extent that the existing situation is now much more pessimistic. The rainy season is already known as the hungry season in Sierra Leone. This year, it could be even more so. For instance, the harvesting of inland valley swamp rice which should have occurred between November and January was severely disrupted due to rebel activities. In addition, land preparation, which is normally done during February to get the

land ready for the planting of upland rice, cassava, maize and groundnuts in April and May has also be seriously disrupted. If the planting season is not successful, the year end harvest will be insufficient to meet Sierra Leone s needs.

The total value of food aid being shipped into Sierra Leone on an annual basis is $50 55 million U.S. per year. The main agencies involved include the World Food Program, CARE, the Catholic Relief Service and World Vision. CIDA has contributed $5.6 million (CDN) toward the Sierra Leone Emergency Food Support which began in April 1997 and continued through to November 1998. World Vision Canada has been at the forefront of this effort procuring and shipping 3,800 metric tons of Canadian commodities valued at over $3 million including wheat, lentils and canola oil. As of October 1998, over a quarter of a million people had received World Vision Canada / CIDA food aid commodities.

The current situation poses serious challenges. The March, 1999 report of the Secretary General on Sierra Leone noted that: *The suffering of vulnerable civilian populations is exacerbated by increasing levels of malnutrition especially among children under five years of age. Preliminary surveys show that in some areas as many as 25 percent of the children are suffering from acute malnutrition.* The Secretary General s report also drew attention to a warning issued by the World Food Program that, if the roads to Freetown were not opened soon allowing the free flow of commercial imports and food from upcountry, food shortages were possible in the city in the near future. The situation in Freetown seems to have eased somewhat. In the last week of March, approximately 3,000 metric tons of food aid arrived from CARE of the United States. The shipment included wheat, corn, vegetable oil and lentils.

In other parts of the country, however, adequate food remains a serious concern. In January and February, aid workers had described the situation in Bo and Kenema as desperate with some people dying of starvation. Recently, however, some traders in Guinea and Freetown have been able to transport supplies to the two towns by ignoring the government s ban on boat traffic. They have transported both food and fuel by sea to the coastal and estuary towns of Shenge and Gbangbatok avoiding roads which are rebel held. While it is a very risky business (it is estimated that 400 people have drowned in boat sinkings since the beginning of March), the profits are considerable. A 100 pound bag of rice which sells for 38,000 leones (about $38 Canadian) in Freetown will fetch 90,000 leones in Bo and 100,000 in Kenema.

Still, the situation in Bo and Kenema remains critical. The latest report from OCHA states that 80,000 people in these two towns are facing severe food shortages. It goes on to say: *The situation worsens day by day as the SRSG and food agencies explore ways in which they can safely bring food in sufficient quantities to the people of Bo and Kenema.*

However, the reports that are getting out about conditions in the interior, such as one on March 20 from the town of Makeni, indicate that food, fuel, medicine and other essential commodities are in very short supply and that serious hardship is being caused for local inhabitants. Another

recent report out of the northern town of Kamakwie stated that at least 20 people per day were dying from starvation, lack of medical attention and rebel atrocities.

Our delegation heard from one NGO official involved in food aid that, once security is restored in Sierra Leone, the country will be in need of assistance with a long-term strategy for food production. Sierra Leone has the capacity to feed itself and produce enough for export. In fact, the country was self-sufficient in food in the 1960 s and it is said by some that if its arable land was properly utilized it could feed all of West Africa. Another food NGO representative that our group spoke with indicated that it was not unreasonable to believe that with the proper conditions Sierra Leone could return to self-sufficiency in food production in two to three years.

Unfortunately, distortions in the marketplace as a result of monopolistic practices that have developed (arrangements between businesses and politicians) have also caused serious problems. In order for food security to be re-established once again, the small producer must be encouraged. Until the security situation changes substantially, it is likely that Sierra Leone will be in a position where it must rely on a substantial amount of outside food aid.

The Children

The children of Sierra Leone have borne the brunt of the conflict. Whether it is in the refugee camps of Guinea, the displaced persons camps in Freetown, the malnutrition and disease that is everywhere or the child soldiers, it is the children of Sierra Leone who are the victims. It is estimated that the eight years of conflict have resulted in the separation of 12,000 children from their families. UNICEF is struggling to put in place programs which will re-unite children with their families. While they have had some success with the National Family Tracing and Reunification Network, it continues to be an uphill battle. One of the most disturbing facts of the rebel invasion of Freetown in January was that it resulted in the 3,000 children reported missing. It is believed that they were abducted by the rebels and that they are not receiving sufficient food or care. Of this figure, the most recent information available for this report indicated that 256 children had been re-united with their families including 51 recently released by the rebels. The location of the other children is simply not known.

Certainly one of the most high profile issues that has come out of the war in Sierra Leone has been the issue of child soldiers. The Secretary General s March report to the Security Council noted that *A significant number of the rebel combatants were children. Reports were received of death and injuries being inflicted by boys as young as eight to 11 years old.* One of the means by which these young children are drawn into the conflict is through a process called de-institutionalization. In many cases, these children are forced by the rebels at gunpoint to kill family members or neighbours. By committing an act of violence against people close to them, not only are they traumatized, they also cannot go back to their families or their communities because of fear of retribution.

The rebels have found this to be a very useful method of socializing these children into a life of extreme violence. In fact, the children also begin to attach or bond with their commanders. Their blind obedience, combined with the effects of alcohol, drugs and a popular belief in juju spirits, convince them of their own invincibility and make them some of the most courageous and disciplined fighters within the rebel factions. The rebels widespread use of child soldiers and the countries that sustain their activities deserve the strongest condemnation by the international community. Unfortunately, our delegation also saw evidence on the streets of Freetown of under-aged combatants who were evidently part of the Kamajor forces. While the Kamajors are supportive of the Government of Sierra Leone, it would seem the Government is able to exercise very little control over Kamajor activities.

Yet another one of the tragedies of this conflict has been the massive numbers of victims of sexual abuse. Many reports both by the media and international agencies have corroborated instances of individual and gang rape of girls and young women who have been rounded up by the rebels. Many rape victims were said to have been subsequently mutilated or murdered. Others have been abducted and have been forced into service as porters, cooks, sex slaves and spies. When our delegation met with NGO s in Freetown, it was evident they believed that this was a problem of significant proportions which was not being adequately addressed. The strong stigma attached to a victim of sexual abuse in West African society meant that many young women and girls were simply not coming forward for psychological treatment.

Also of great concern is the issue of education. The Ministry of Education has reported that 300 schools were damaged or destroyed throughout Sierra Leone in the period following the May, 1997 military coup. After the January fighting in Freetown, 64 government schools, both primary and secondary, were closed because of damage. Another 30 schools are currently being used for shelter. There are no schools functioning in the interior of the country even in towns that have Kamajor protection like Bo, Kenema and Makeni.

The full school population of Sierra Leone is between 600-700,000. The primary population is estimated at 350,000. The number of primary school age children now receiving some form of education is estimated at about 30-35,000. In many of the schools in Freetown, instruction occurs for only a few hours per day since a large number of teachers have left the country. Textbooks, benches and desks have been looted or burned as fuel. Many children have lost up to three years of education, and as a result, are losing their future. One encouraging project worthy of note is an initiative that was launched recently by Mr. Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone. Through this project, schools in Britain will donate educational materials and equipment to Sierra Leone.

PART 4 - POLITICAL AND PEACE PROCESS

The Two (Three) Track Policy

The situation in Sierra Leone should be viewed as a test of the global community s commitment to democracy, human rights and human security. A last minute reaction by ECOMOG and the arrival of new troops was necessary in early January to prevent the rebels from seizing Freetown and the fall of the democratically elected government of President Kabbah. The official policy of the GOSL and its allies has not changed since the unfortunate events of January 1999. On the one hand, peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue and negotiation is encouraged, and on the other, continued military pressure on the rebel forces is felt to be necessary, to force them to negotiate. As has been mentioned earlier, this is the two track policy.

Our delegation is of the view that this policy is sound and should be encouraged. To improve its chances of success, a third track should be added - the determined involvement of the international community. Without external support, be it diplomatic, military or humanitarian, the conflict in Sierra Leone, which actually is a regional conflict, has the potential to destabilize the whole of Western Africa.

Obviously, the GOSL and ECOMOG are now attempting to win points in the field and better position themselves so as not to negotiate from a position of weakness. This suggests to certain doubtful observers that the government is favouring the military solution over peaceful negotiation. Our delegation does not share this view. The recent three day meeting of the National Consultative Conference on the Peace Process (NCCPP) is a further proof, if one was required, that the GOSL is genuinely committed to the double track policy.

The Rebels Agenda

The true intentions of the rebel forces are not clear, but we know that the rebels are diverse and multi-faceted. Composed of the RUF of Foday Sankoh, the AFRC, warlords that are more or less autonomous, foreign combatants (Liberians and possibly Burkinabè), and even Ukrainian mercenaries - it is a complex mix of individuals and organizations. Some of their ranks clearly believe in a military victory, which just eluded their grasp last January. Other rebels apparently see no need to negotiate and are satisfied with the present situation since they control the diamond area, the principal source of the country's wealth. Some would be happy to leave the bush and end the guerilla warfare if only they could be sure they could rejoin the Sierra Leone army or benefit from the rehabilitation program. In short, the rebels are driven by various motives. Apart from a general rejection of a corrupt political class referred to in their only major political statement Footpaths to Democracy published in 1995, the rebels appear not to have a formal agenda. Indeed, one could argue that since then the RUF has engaged in such gross human rights violations, mutilations, amputations, sexual assaults, and murders, that they have lost any legitimacy that they might have been able to claim based upon any previous political platform .

The Peace Process

Since the events in January, all the allies of the legitimate government, with the exception of a few hawks around President Kabbah, recognize that a military victory is impossible and acknowledge the necessity of opening a dialogue, if not negotiation, with the rebel forces. President Kabbah has clearly been under strong pressure to do this from Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea. While they are resolved not to let the rebels win, these countries do not want to get bogged down in Sierra Leone in perpetuity. They want a negotiated regional solution which will put an end once and for all to the pillaging of rebel troops in the sub-region.

Everyone also considers that the first stage in the peace process is a meeting between Foday Sankoh, in jail since 1997, and his men. This meeting is scheduled to take place in Togo in late April. It is expected to last about a week.

In addition to allowing the rebels to develop a common platform with a view to negotiations, the Togo meeting will also serve other purposes. It will serve to identify the different leaders of the rebellion, particularly the ones who matter. Apart from Sam Bockarie ("Maskita") and Omrie Golley, little is known of the other protagonists, since Sankoh's principal commanders were sentenced to death and executed last November.

This meeting will also be a means of gauging Sankoh's hold over his troops. Some believe that Sankoh no longer has the control over the rebels that he did in 1996. This is disturbing, as Sankoh is regarded as a lesser evil. There even appears to be an effort by the GOSL to reinforce his legitimacy as spokesman for the rebels.

Finally, this meeting will help establish whether Sankoh is truly sincere in his desire to make peace. Thus far he has said from prison everything that had to be said, but there are questions as to his sincerity. Some feel that, in jail and with a death sentence (against which he is appealing) hanging over his head, Sankoh had no other option than to cooperate with the GOSL. This uncertainty explains Kabbah's insistence that Sankoh return to prison after the Togo talks. Kabbah wants to see what will happen in Togo and how Sankoh will behave before deciding, if the appeal fails, to pardon and release him.

The Negotiators

The representative of the UN Secretary-General, Francis Okelo, and the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) are the two stakeholders at the origin of the Togo meeting. Both have met with Kabbah and Sankoh and apparently established relations of trust with the two leaders. It is their intervention that has allowed Sankoh radio contact with Bockarie. The IRCSL will also be attending the Togo meeting at Sankoh's request. Both Okelo and the IRCSL should be supported.

The Abidjan Accord

A document prepared by the government in consultation with the NGOs will be submitted to the attention of Sankoh and his supporters. It is reasonable to believe that this document will reiterate the essential elements of the Abidjan Accord, for all agree that the latter must constitute the basis for any new agreement, especially since Foday Sankoh accepted the legitimacy of President Kabbah. But that was in 1996. Given recent developments, it is unclear whether Bockarie will continue to support Sankoh`s position on recognition.

Moreover, the Abidjan Accord has many flaws that will have to be addressed. As it is now, it is almost a dangerous document. It has no implementation, monitoring and dispute resolution mechanism. One will have to be incorporated in any new deal. Given the enormous mistrust between Kabbah and Sankoh, it will also be necessary to provide for a series of confidence-building measures. President Kabbah has said that he expected a peace accord to be reached before the end of April. This statement appears overly optimistic.

Striking a political deal with the rebels will not be an easy task. The situation can be resolved ultimately only by a negotiated settlement. That the RUF has to be a party to the solution is self-evident. This does not mean, however, that they will want to be part of it; more so in the light of the conclusions of the recently held NCCPP. Indeed, at this meeting, the NCCPP reaffirmed the resolve of the population to oppose any idea of power-sharing with the rebels before the next election. They also insisted that RUF leader Sankoh s appeal should go through the due process of law. The debate around the amnesty issue will also prove to be a delicate balancing exercise to manage. Some are of the view that the RUF could, in a first instance, be cooperative if it had the promise and the support to transform itself into a political party. But, as seen above, the RUF is but one component of the conflict.

Moreover, most of the NGO`s our delegation met have insisted on the necessity of not setting any artificial deadline for the talks. They believe a sustainable peace will require all the protagonists to take a hard look at what has happened in Sierra Leone, what has gone wrong, the type of values that should guide reconstruction of the country, and the nature of the institutions the country will want. From their perspective, the best that can emerge from the Togo talks is a cease-fire agreement combined with a commitment to undertake (a) an in-depth examination of the real, deep-rooted causes of the conflict, and (b) a dialogue on the type of country desired.

The Regional Dimension of the Conflict

Concurrently with this national effort, it is clear that a sustainable peace cannot be achieved in Sierra Leone without the involvement of the countries in the region, both those that support President Kabbah (Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea) and those that support the rebels (Liberia and Burkina Faso). In fact, without Liberia collaborating actively with the RUF, the rebels would have undoubtedly faltered after the ECOMOG offensive in February 1998, which resulted in the restoration of the Kabbah government. The rebellion has certainly benefited from important

outside support, and the peace process would have to take into account the regional dimension of the conflict.

There is undoubtedly a francophone-anglophone dimension, and malaise, to this conflict. The francophone countries as a whole are uncomfortable with Nigeria, a regional power that they claim tends to act unilaterally. They criticize Nigeria for doing whatever it pleases, with no dialogue with the other players. They criticize it in particular for having transformed ECOMOG from a neutral response force into a partisan occupying force. Nigeria and Ghana, on the other hand, are suspicious of former sympathies that some francophone countries had for Charles Taylor at the time of the civil war in Liberia.

Politically, it would be desirable for other francophone countries in the region to supply troops for ECOMOG. Many of the people that our delegation met felt that France should be more involved in the search for a lasting peace in the sub-region. For instance, it could be asked to use its influence to convince Senegal and/or Benin to send troops to Sierra Leone. This may require that a western country (e.g. Canada) provides logistical support. It was suggested that France might also be convinced to use its influence with both President Taylor and Compaoré to curb Liberia and Burkina Faso's assistance to the rebels.

The Mechanisms

Supported by SRSG Okelo, ECOWAS, which already has the Group of Six (Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo) mechanism in place is probably in the best position to pilot any discussions. But it will need the continued support of the international community, of countries like U.K., USA, France and Canada, of international organizations like the UN, the Commonwealth and the francophonie, to deal with the regional dimension of this conflict, among other things. It is in fact difficult to see how ECOWAS could by itself arbitrate a resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone. The mediation of a neutral and respected outside party will likely be necessary.

There is another *ad hoc* mechanism, the Contact Group on Sierra Leone, an initiative of the UK, which met in New York on April 19 for the second time in recent months. It is a group made up of donor countries as well as multilateral agencies (the UN family, the World Bank, the Commonwealth, the European Commission and ECOWAS). Its purpose is to sustain, widen and help co-ordinate international support for Sierra Leone and ECOMOG. Eventually, when peace and stability return to Sierra Leone, it is intended that this group will help to mobilize the necessary financial resources towards the reconstruction of the country.

The Security Council, although it spends roughly 60% of its time dealing with African issues, has come under criticism for a lack of substantive action on security issues on the continent. In this regard, the Security Council, with its mandate of maintaining international peace and security, has an important role to play in the search for a solution to the crisis in Sierra Leone. To date, this has included the establishment of a sanctions regime, in addition to the existing

sanctions on Liberia; the establishment of a United Nations Observer Mission, UNOMSIL; and the authorization of ECOMOG s presence in Sierra Leone. Earlier attempts to deploy a UN peacekeeping operation were blocked by the RUF. The security situation in Sierra Leone is such that UNOMSIL s mandate cannot be delivered at present. The authorization remains active, and a small number of personnel remain in Conakry and Freetown, so that the UN presence can be increased rapidly when circumstances permit.

The Council s inability to act more vigorously on Sierra Leone can be attributed to: i) the absence of key conditions for a classic UN peacekeeping deployment (i.e. cease-fire, consent of the parties); ii) the difficulty associated with deploying a UN peacekeeping operation given the great danger to peacekeepers and the great difficulty of access and supply; iii) the fact that ECOMOG s presence lessens or eliminates the requirement for a more robust UN peacekeeping operation; and iv) the reluctance of some Council members (especially the US) to commit additional resources to new and/or invigorated peace support operations.

ECOWAS countries providing troops to ECOMOG in Sierra Leone would welcome greater attention from the Security Council including financial assistance to underwrite the cost of the ECOMOG operation in Sierra Leone.

Canada s Role

If Canada decides to become more involved, it is clear that our contribution would be most welcomed. Many senior officials in the region, including the President of Sierra Leone, the Prime Minister of Guinea and the Vice President of Ghana, made this point very clear to our delegation. In addition, some noted that our membership in both the Commonwealth and the Francophonie could help bridge the gap between Anglophone and Francophone Africa. Our first move should be to request to participate as an observer at meetings of the ECOWAS Group of Six. The US and the UK are already doing it. Ambassador Traoré of Côte d Ivoire has assured us of his government s support in this regard. Canada could play an important support role in the dialogue/negotiations process since it is perceived as "neutral" and with no "hidden agenda" in this matter. For example, through its Peacebuilding Fund, Canada could provide competent NGOs with the financial support to assist in the peace process and the national reconciliation effort.

Canada has the potential to play a significant and meaningful role in the resolution of the crisis in Sierra Leone. However, in order to become an active participant in the diplomatic effort, Canada must be prepared to make a substantial contribution to the security and humanitarian needs of the country.

CONCLUSION

Although in the region for a relatively short time, two facts became readily apparent to our delegation. First, the crisis in Sierra Leone parallels in many respects the crisis in Kosovo in terms of the scale of the human tragedy. Regrettably, it has received little international attention. The precarious nature of the situation and its potential impact on the entire region of West Africa cannot be stressed enough; the country is on the brink of becoming a West African version of Somalia. If this happens, there is every chance that it will drag the rest of the region down with it. Urgent action is required by Canada and other members of the international community now.

Second, despite the seriousness of the circumstances, there is in fact a glimmer of hope for the country and the region as a whole . There exists now a narrow window of opportunity for the international community to assist Sierra Leone to back away from the abyss. The breadth and depth of assistance required is daunting but not unattainable, and it will require a concerted and coordinated effort in the political, security and humanitarian arenas on the part of the international community. It but remains to galvanize that support so desperately needed by the people of the region to start Sierra Leone and its neighbours back on the path of democracy, reconstruction and long-term stability.

The degree of destruction in this tiny West African nation (the poorest on the face of the Earth according to the UN Human Development Index) and the depth of suffering of its people alone are enough to merit our collective global compassion. There are, however, other equally compelling reasons for continued and even expanded Canadian involvement in the region.

Like Canada, Sierra Leone is a member of the Commonwealth and, in fact, traces its origins back to 1792 when freed slaves from Nova Scotia helped establish Freetown. Like Sierra Leone, we share a colonial past and many similar traditions and institutions in terms of our legal, political and administrative structures. Moreover, as the top-ranked nation of the UN Human Development Index, Canada has a certain special obligation to help those at the opposite end of the scale. The protection of civilians in conflict and the plight of women and children in war torn societies, both serious issues in Sierra Leone, are two pillars of the human security agenda championed around the globe by Canada and reflect the fundamental values and respect for humanity that characterize Canadian society today.

The GOSL s two-track strategy is the only realistic option under the circumstances. With the necessary commitment from all parties concerned, it has some chance of success. This report has tried to outline a third supporting track involving the more active, concerted and direct involvement of the international community. Whether it is the provision of financial support to those regional organizations involved in the negotiations for peace, political support for the Government of Sierra Leone s first (or negotiation) track through international organizations such as the United Nations Security Council or acting as a link between the anglo- and

francophone African nations, there could well be an important political role to be played by Canada in both Sierra Leone and in the sub-region.

However, it became quite apparent to our delegation that political support was not going to be enough to stave off a further deterioration in the situation. Indeed, success in the government s second track (security) appears to be almost a prerequisite for success in the first. Our delegation shared the view of the GOSL, and virtually every other government visited, that there is no military solution to the conflict in Sierra Leone. The security track is best dealt with by a regional force such as ECOMOG which is responsive to the problems of the region. If ECOMOG is to succeed in doing what is expected of it, however, it will need both the political and logistical support of the international community. To that end, Canada should continue to support ECOMOG and seriously consider expanding that support to include some form of lethal support as well.

Security issues are not restricted to military matters. There is a serious need for all types of support for civilian police activities, both in Sierra Leone and in neighbouring Guinea. Canada was involved in the Commonwealth police initiatives in Sierra Leone last year, and should this initiative be reactivated, future Canadian involvement might well be both warranted and desirable. As well, the expertise resident in numerous Canadian police forces and the ability of Canadian police forces to provide training in French puts Canada in a good position to investigate the feasibility of providing equipment and training to police forces in Guinea.

The scope of the humanitarian dimension of the conflict in Sierra Leone is huge, and the potential for it to expand is even larger - there is so much to be done. In the short term, shelter, food and medicine are the most immediate needs, and of special note is the desperate need for both physical and psychological treatment of the non-combatant victims of the Sierra Leone conflict, particularly the children. Short term assistance will not be enough, for the very infrastructure of Sierra Leone society has been severely damaged. The country must have the ability to absorb and make best use of the assistance provided, so to that end there is a need now to begin rebuilding the capacity to implement long term activities in areas such as agriculture. Lastly, long term development aid is not often considered at the forefront of peace negotiations. In Sierra Leone, however, there is considerable potential for longer term aid to be used as an effective tool in the ongoing peace process.

The scale of suffering and the needs of Sierra Leone are truly astounding, particularly when experienced first hand. One does not have to be there long to realise just how fragile the situation is in both the nation and indeed the region. Yet, despite all the dangers, there is hope among the people of Sierra Leone that peace and stability may be within their grasp.

Canada has the potential to play an important leadership role and to make a significant contribution to the peace and security of this impoverished and war torn part of West Africa.

Bibliography

Abdullah, Ibrahim, Bush Path to Destruction: The origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front , *Africa and Development*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 3/4, 1997

Abdullah, Ibrahim and Muana, Patrick, The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone , in Clapham, Christopher (ed.), Africa Guerrillas, James Currey, Oxford, 1998

Amnesty International, Sierra leone 1998 - A Year of Atrocities Against Civilians , Report AFR51/22/98, London, November 1998

Bangura, Yusuf, Understanding the Political and Cultural Dynamics of the Sierra Leone War: A Critique of Paul Richard s Fighting for the Rain Forest , *Africa and Development*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 3/4, 1997

Cartwright, J.R., *Politics in Sierra Leone, 1947-1967*, University of Toronto Press, 1970

Cartwright, J.R., *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone*, University of Toronto Press, 1978

Douglas, Ian, Fighting for Diamonds - Private Military Companies in Sierra Leone , in J. Cilliers and J. Mason (eds.), *Peace, Profit or Plunder?*, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House (South Africa), 1999

Ellis, Stephen, Liberia s Warlord Insurgency , in Clapham, Christopher (ed.), African Guerillas, James Currey, Oxford, 1998

Gberie, Lansana, War and State Collapse: The Case of Sierra Leone , Masters Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1997

Lewis, Roy, Sierra Leone , Her Majesty s Stationery Office, London, 1954

Peterson, John, Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870", Faber and Faber, London, 1969

Richards, Paul, Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone , The International African Institute, James Currey and Heinemann, Oxford and Portsmouth (N.H.), 1996

Sierra Leone News, Sierra Leone Web, URL www.Sierra-Leone.org/slnews.html

UNDP, Human Resources Report 1998", OUP, New York, 1998

Canadian Centre
For Foreign Policy
Development

Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

125 promenade Sussex Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

SELECTED CCFPD REPORTS FROM 2000-2001[1]

Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Renewing Partnerships for the Prevention of Armed Conflict: Options to Enhance Rapid Deployment and Initiate a UN Standing Emergency Capability. Peter Langille, Global Human Security Ideas and Initiatives. Fall 2000.

Report from the Roundtable on Expert Deployment to International Peace Operations. CCFPD. September 12, 2000.

Canadian Peacebuilding in the Middle East: Case Study of the Canada Fund in Israel/Palestine and Jordan. Tami Amanda Jacoby, University of Manitoba. Fall 2000.

Les Enterprises canadiennes et la consolidation de la paix. Jean-Francois Rioux, Francisco-José Valiente, and Christian Geiser, Université du Québec a Montréal. Le 31 octobre 2000.

Nuclear Weapons and Small Arms

Ballistic Missiles Foreign Experts Roundtable Report. Ernie Regehr, Project Ploughshares and Peter Moore, CCFPD. March 30, 2000.

NATO-Nuclear Weapons Roundtable Report. CCFPD. August 24-25, 2000.

Small Arms and the OAS Roundtable Report. CCFPD. April 28, 2000.

Examen des récentes initiatives gouvernementales et d'ONG concernant les armes légères et appréciation sur leur efficience: proposition pour un indice de sécurité individuelle (ISI). Frances Gaudreault et al. Summer 2000.

Globalization and Firearms: A Public Health Perspective. Wendy Cukier et al. Fall 2000.

Borders

Perspectives on the Borderless World: Issues for Canada. Heather Nicol and Ian Townsend-Gault. Fall 2000.

New Diplomacy

Report from the Roundtable on Just War and Genocide. CCFPD. December 8-9, 2000.

Report from the Ottawa Roundtable for the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). CCFPD. January 15, 2001.

.../2

[1] **Visit www.cfp-pec.gc.ca for more reports and other publications.**

Tel./Tél. : (613) 944-8278 Fax/Télécopieur : (613) 944-0687
www.cfp-pec.gc.ca

Children's Rights
Children and Violent Conflict: Meeting the Challenge of Diversity. Erin Baines, Dalhousie University; Barry Burciul, University of Toronto. Summer 2000.

Business and Labour
Canadian Firms, Canadian Values. Canadian Business for Social Responsibility. May 2000.

Africa
Report from the Ottawa Nigeria Roundtable. CCFPD. March 20, 2000.

Asia-Pacific
APEC Media Monitoring Report: A Synopsis of Key Findings from IMPACS' 1999 Youth Internship Project. Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society. 2000.

Report from the Burma and Drugs Roundtable. CCFPD. May 15, 2000.

Report from the North Korea Roundtable. CCFPD. January 22, 2001.

Report from the Victoria Roundtable on Indonesia. CCFPD. March 13, 2000.

Europe
Report on Cyprus: Living Together in the New Century Roundtable. CCFPD. February 14, 2000.

Americas
Canada, Indigenous Peoples and the Hemisphere Roundtable Report. CCFPD. March 23, 2000.

CCFPD Summary Report: The Americas. CCFPD. Fall 2001.
Rapport de syntèse du CCDPE: les Amériques. CCFPD. Fall 2001.

Threats to Democracy in America. Max Cameron, Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL). March 3-4, 2000.

Report from the Roundtable on Governance, Civil Society and the Americas. CCFPD. January 28, 2000.

Report from the Roundtable on Canada-Cuba Relations. CCFPD. January 18, 2000.

Look Ahead to Windsor Roundtable Report (OAS). CCFPD. April 26, 2000.

Culture
Commerce International et diversité culturelle: la recherche d'un dificile équilibre. Ivan Bernier, Université Laval and Dave Atkinson. 2000.

Circumpolar Issues
Roundtable on Northern Foreign Policy: Feedback and Look Ahead. CCFPD. February 5, 2001.

Foreign Policy Research
Gendered Discourses, Gendered Practices: Feminists (Re)Write Canadian Foreign Policy. Claire Turenne Sjolander, University of Ottawa; Heather Smith, University of Northern British Columbia; Deborah Stienstra, University of Winnipeg. May and July 2000.